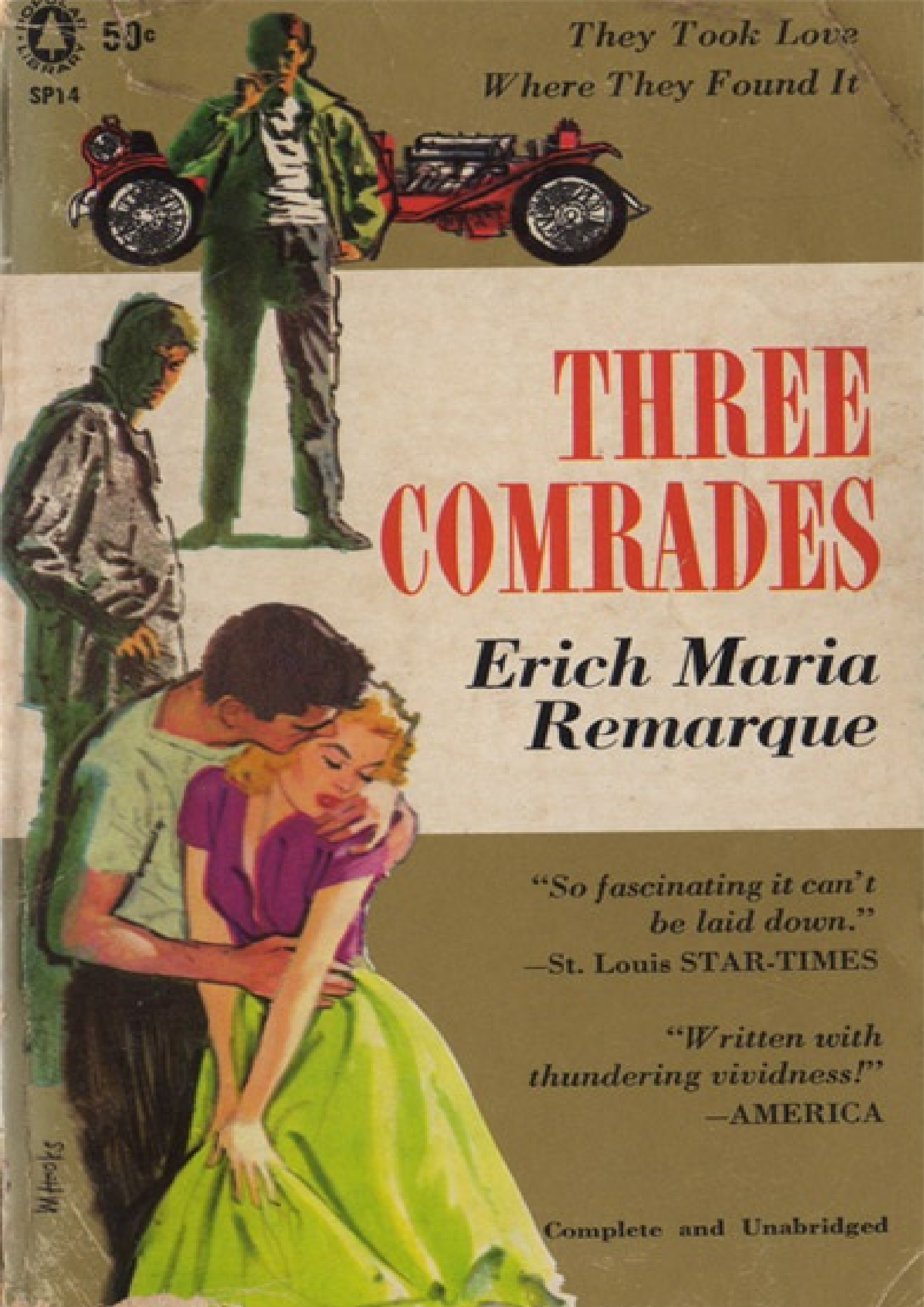
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They Took Love
Where They Found It
THREE
COMRADES
Erich Maria
Remarque
"So fascinating it can't
be laid down."
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thundering vividness!"
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Complete and Unabridged

STOLEN LOVE

Bob had seen too much.
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his "comrades" of the street.
He moved among the lost and damned,
living on borrowed dreams and stolen love.

Lovely Patricia was just another refugee from boredom,
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Remarque as a great novelist—more than a great
narrator of the horrors of war."

Boston HERALD

A NOTE ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Recognized as one of the world's outstanding novelists,
Erich Maria Remarque was born in Osnabruck, Germany,
and is now a United States citizen dividing his time between
New York and Switzerland.**

He established himself in the world of letters with the
writing of ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT and
followed this great World War I novel with THREE COMRADES,
ARCH OF TRIUMPH, SPARK OF LIFE, A TIME TO LOVEAND

A TIME TO DIE and his very recent bestseller THE BLACK OBELISK.

FROM THE REVIEWS

"The author of ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT has written a very different, but hardly less memorable novel in THREE COMRADES. Erich Maria Remarque's new novel is less bitter, less intense, than his former one; it is long rather than short—and about the most readable work of Action published in a long while. It is a novel with a story so fascinating that it can't be laid aside; told through action and incident quickly and directly. It has the simplicity of greatness."

—ST. LOUIS *STAR-TIMES*

"The qualities which distinguish Remarque as a writer are abundantly displayed in THREE COMRADES. Simplicity and strength, humor and tenderness, a poet's sensitive reactions both to the things that are tangible and to those that are not—all these have been united in his work from the beginning, but to them there is added now, I think, a growing power of characterization . . . There is evident for the first time the power to build up the story of the unfolding of a human relationship—for THREE COMRADES has for its focus one of the most poignant love stories that have been told in our time."

—NEW YORK *TIMES*

"As you read Remarque's kindly, lilting, sad-eyed novel, so informal an epilogue to an era, you cannot help placing it against the books in other countries that were written by men like him. You remember the Hemingway of THE SUN ALSO RISES . . . It is the bitter-sweet tang of youth, the slow ebb of an anxious conscience 'mixing memory and desire,' that one responds to in this book; a pleasure as warmly sad as nostalgic, something caught out of turmoil and held against the presence of time."

—NEW YORK *HERALD* TRIBUNE

A Memorable Novel

THREE COMRADES

Translated from the German by
A. W. WHEEN

ERICH MARIA REMARQUE
Author of "The Black Obelisk"
and "A Time to Love and A Time to Die"

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Chapter I

The sky was yellow as brass, not yet hidden by the smoke from the chimney stacks. Behind the roofs of the factory the radiance was especially bright. The sun must be just rising. I looked at my watch; not eight o'clock. A quarter of an hour too early.

Still I opened the gate, and put the petrol pump in readiness. There was always a car or two passing at that hour wanting a fill.

Suddenly I heard behind me a harsh, high-pitched squeaking—like the sound of a rusty hoist being turned somewhere down under the earth. I stood still and listened. I walked back across the yard to the workshop and cautiously opened the door.

A ghost—stumbling about in the gloom! It had a dirty white cloth wound about its head, its skirt was hitched up to give its knees clearance; it had a blue apron, a pair of thick slippers, and was wielding a broom; it weighed around fourteen stone, and was in fact our charwoman, Matilda Stoss.

I stood watching her. With all the grace of a hippopotamus, she made her way staggering among the radiators, singing in a hollow voice as she went "the Song of the Bold Hussar." On the bench by the window stood two cognac bottles, one of them almost empty. Last night they had been full. I had forgotten to lock them away.

"But Frau Stoss!" I protested.

The singing stopped; the broom dropped to the floor. The beatific smile died away. Now it was my turn to be the ghost.

"Holy Jesus!" exclaimed Matilda, staring at me with bleary eyes. "I wasn't expecting you yet."

"That doesn't surprise me. Did it taste good?"

"Sure and it did. But this is so awkward, Herr Lohkamp." She wiped her hand across her mouth. "I just can't understand—"

"Come, Matilda, that's an exaggeration. You're only tight —full as a tick, eh?"

She maintained her balance with difficulty and stood there blinking like an old owl. Gradually her mind became clear. Resolutely she took a step forward.

"Man is human, Herr Lohkamp, after all. . . I only smelled it at first . . .

and then I took just one little nip, because well, you know, I always have had a weak stomach . . . and then . . . then I think the Devil must have got hold of me. Anyway, you have no right to lead an old woman into temptation, leaving good bottles standing about like that. . . ."

It was not the first time I had caught her so. She used to come to us for two hours every morning to clean up the workshop; and though one might leave as much money lying around as one liked she would never disturb it—but schnapps she could smell out as far off as a rat a slice of bacon.

I held up the bottles. "Naturally! You've left the customers' cognac. . . . But the good stuff, Herr Köster's own—you've polished it all off."

A grin appeared on her weather-beaten face. "Trust me, Herr Lohkamp; I'm a connoisseur! But you won't tell, Herr Lohkamp—and me a poor widow?"

She unpinned her skirt. "Then I'd better be going. If Herr Köster should catch me . . ." She threw up her hands.

I went to the cupboard and opened it. "Matilda. . . ."

She came waddling along. I held up a rectangular brown bottle.

Protesting, she held up her hands.

"It wasn't me," she said. "Honour bright, it wasn't, Herr Lohkamp. I didn't even smell it!"

"You don't even know what it is, I suppose?" said I, filling a glass.

"No?" she replied, licking her lips. "Rum. Stone Age Jamaica."

"Excellent! Then how about a glass?"

"Me?" She started back. "This is too much, Herr Lohkamp! This is heaping coals of fire on my head. Here's old Stoss goes and mops up all your cognac on the quiet and then you treat her to a rum on top of it! You're a saint, Herr Lohkamp, that's what you are! I'll see myself in my grave before I touch a drop of it."

"You're quite sure, Matilda?" said I, making to drink it myself.

"Well, all right, then," said she swiftly, seizing the glass.

"One must take the good as it comes. Even though one doesn't understand. Good health! It's not your birthday, I suppose?"

"More or less, Matilda. A good guess."

"No, not really?" She seized my hand. "Many happy returns! And lots of dough, Herr Lohkamp. . . . Why, I'm all of a quiver. . . . I must have another to celebrate that. I'm as fond of you as if you were my own son!"

"Very good."

I poured her another glass. She tipped it down, and, still singing my praises, she left the workshop.

I put the bottle away and sat down at the table. The pallid sunlight through the window shone upon my hands. A queer feeling, a birthday—even though it means nothing. Thirty years. . . . I remember the time when I thought I should never reach twenty—it seemed so far away. And then. . . .

I took a sheet of paper from the drawer and began to reckon. Childhood, school—an unresolvable complex of things and happenings—so remote, another world, not real any more. Real life began only in 1916. I had just joined the Army—eighteen years of age, thin and lanky. And a snotty sergeant-major who used to make me practise, on-the-hands-down, over and over again in the mud of the ploughed fields at the back of the barracks . . . One evening my mother came to the barracks to visit me; but she had to wait for me over an hour, because I had failed to pack my kit the regulation way, and as punishment had been ordered to scrub out the latrines. She offered to help me, but that was not allowed. She cried, and I was so tired that I fell asleep as I sat there beside her.

1917. Flanders. Mittendorf and I bought a bottle of red wine at the canteen. . . . We intended to celebrate. But we never got so far, for early that morning the English bombardment began. Köster was wounded about midday; Meyer and Deters were killed during the afternoon. Then, with nightfall, just as we thought things were quietening down, and were about to draw the cork, gas came over and filled the dugouts. We had our masks on in good time, but Mittendorf's was defective, and by the time he knew it, it was too late. He ripped it off, but before a new one could be found he had swallowed so much gas he was spewing blood. He died the next morning, green and black in the face.

1918. That was in hospital. A fresh convoy had come in a few days before. Paper bandages. Badly wounded cases. Groans. Low operating-trolleys trundling back and forth all day. Josef Stoll was in the bed next to mine. Both his legs were off, but he didn't know that. He could not see it, because the bedclothes were supported on a wire cradle. He would not have believed it anyway, for he could still feel the pain in his feet. Two chaps died in the night in our room, one very slowly and hard.

1919. Home again. Revolution. Starvation. And outside the machine-guns rattling. Soldier against soldier.

1920. *Putsch*. Karl Bröger shot. Köster and Lenz arrested. My mother in

hospital. Cancer.

1921. . . .

I pondered awhile. No, I couldn't remember. That year, was missing. 1922, I was a platelayer in Thuringia; 1923, advertising manager for a rubber goods firm. That was during the inflation. At one time I was earning as much as two hundred billion marks a month. We used to be paid twice a day, each payment followed by a half-hour's leave, so that one could dash out to the shops and buy something before next publication of the dollar exchange rate—for by that time the money would be again worth only half.

And then what? The years after that? I put down the pencil. There was no point in going over all that. Anyway, I could not remember any longer; it had been all too confused. My last birthday I celebrated as pianist at the Café International. It was then I met Köster and Lenz once more. And now here I was in the Aurewo—Auto-Repair-Workshop; Köster & Co. Lenz and I were the "Co.," but the shop belonged really only to Köster. He had been our school friend, and in the Army pur company commander; then he became an air pilot, and later for a time a student; then a speedway racer. . . . And finally he had bought this show. Lenz, after spending some years drifting around South America, had been first to join him—then I.

I fished a cigarette from my pocket. After all, I had every reason to be content. I was not so badly off really; I had work, I was strong, I did not tire easily, I was healthy as things go. . . . But it was better not to think too much about all that—when alone, at any rate; and especially at night. For every now and then things had a way of rising up suddenly out of the past and staring at one with dead eyes. It was against such times that one kept a bottle of schnapps.

The gate creaked on its hinges. I tore up the slip of paper with the dates on it and threw it into the wastepaper basket. The door burst open, and Gottfried Lenz—tall, thin, with a straw-coloured mop of hair and a nose that might have belonged to somebody else—stood framed in the doorway.

"Bobby," he bawled, "you lump of obesity, stand up! Put your heels together! Your superior officers wish to speak to you!

"Herrgott!" I stood up. "I hoped you wouldn't remember. . . . Don't make a song about it."

"You're not the only one to be considered," said Gottfried, putting down on the table a parcel in which was something that clinked and rattled. Köster came in after him.

Lenz stood towering over me. "What was the first thing you met this morning, Bob?"

I thought awhile. "An old woman dancing."

"Holy Moses! There's an omen, if you like! Fits in with your horoscope exactly! I had it cast yesterday. You are born under Sagittarius—weak, unreliable, a reed in the wind—with Saturn sitting in an ugly quarter and Jupiter unfavourable this year. Köster and I are in *loco parentis*, you understand, therefore I ask you to accept, for your very necessary protection, first this amulet. I had it from a direct descendant of the last of the Incas. She had blue blood and flat feet; she was lousy, and had the gift of clairvoyance. 'Pale-faced stranger,' she said to me, 'kings have worn this; the power of sun, moon and earth are in it, to say nothing of the lesser planets. . . . Give me a silver dollar for it to buy schnapps and it is yours.' That the chain of fortune may not be broken, I now give it to you. May it preserve you and put to flight unfriendly Jupiter." He hung about my neck a little black figure suspended on a thin chain. "There. That is against major misfortunes. . . . Against those of every day, there is this—six bottles of rum. From Otto. Every drop twice as old as you are."

He opened the parcel and stood the bottles up one by one in the morning sunshine. They glowed like amber. "Looks marvellous," said I. "Where did you get it, Otto?"

Köster smiled. "That's a long story. But say, Boy, how do you feel? Thirty?"

I shook my head. "Like sixteen and fifty both at the same time. Pretty punk, in other words. . . ."

"Pretty punk! What do you mean?" objected Lenz. "Why, that's the most wonderful thing in the world. It means you've conquered time and are living twice over!"

Köster looked at me. "Let him alone, Gottfried," said he then. "Birthdays weigh heavily on one's self-esteem. Early in the morning especially. He'll pick up later."

Lenz knit his brows. "The less a man thinks of himself the better he is. Doesn't that comfort you now, Bob?"

"Not at all," said I. "The better a man is the more he has to live up to. I

find that rather strenuous and a bore anyway."

"Wonderful! He's philosophizing, Otto! He's saved already," said Lenz. "The worst is over—the crisis is over— he's past the birthday hour when a man looks himself in the eye and finds that after all he is only a poor mutt. . . Now for the daily round with a quiet mind, and to the old Cadillac to oil his innards."

We worked till dusk, then washed and dressed.

Lenz eyed the row of bottles covetously. "What do you say to cracking one, Otto?"

"That's for Bob, not for me, to say," said Köster. "You know, Gottfried, it's not polite to make a gift and then throw off hints like a howitzer."

"Still less is it polite to let a benefactor die of thirst," retorted Lenz, drawing a cork.

The smell filled the whole place.

"Holy Mother!" exclaimed Gottfried.

We all sniffed.

"Fantastic, Otto! Outside the poets, there are not words to describe it."

"It's too good for this murky hole," said Lenz. "I've an idea. . . . Let's go and have supper in the country somewhere and take the bottles with us. We can finish them off in God's great out-of-doors."

"Excellent!"

We shoved aside the Cadillac on which we had been working all afternoon, and disclosed behind it a queer-look ing object on four wheels: Otto Köster's racing car—the pride of the workshop.

Köster had bought the car, a top-heavy old bus, at an auction for next to nothing. Connoisseurs who saw it at the time pronounced it without hesitation an interesting specimen for a transport museum. Bollwies, wholesale manufacturer of ladies' ready-made dresses and incidentally a speedway enthusiast, advised Otto to convert it into a sewing machine. But Köster was not to be discouraged. He took down the car as if it had been a watch, and worked on it night after night for months. Then one evening he turned up in it outside the bar which we usually frequented. Bollwies nearly fell over with laughing when he saw it, it still looked so funny. For a bit of fun he challenged Otto to a race. He offered two hundred marks to twenty if Köster would take him on in his new sports car—course ten kilometres, Otto to have a kilometre start. Otto took up the bet. But Otto went one better. He refused the handicap and raised the odds to even money, a thousand marks each way.

Bollwies, delighted, offered to drive him to a mental home immediately. Everyone laughed and prepared to enjoy the joke. Köster's only response was to switch on his engine. They set off to settle the matter at once. Bollwies came back looking as if he had seen the great sea serpent, and wrote out the cheque and another as well. He wanted to buy the machine on the spot. But Köster just laughed at him. He wouldn't have parted with it for any money on earth. Outside it looked a terrible wreck, but inside it was like a new pin. For daily use we had rigged it with a particularly old-fashioned body that had just happened to fit; the paint was gone, the mudguards were split, and the hood was quite ten years old! We could have done it better, of course. But we had a reason for not doing so.

"Karl," we christened him—Karl, the Road Spook.

Karl was sniffing along the highway.

"Otto," said I, "here comes a victim."

A big Buick hooted impatiently behind us. He was overtaking us rapidly. Soon the two radiators were level. The man at the wheel glanced at us idly! His eye surveyed the shabby Karl contemptuously. Then he looked away—and had forgotten us already.

A few seconds later he was obliged to notice that Karl was still running him neck-and-neck. He sat up a little, gave us an amused glance, and stepped on the accelerator. Still Karl did not yield. Little and fleet as a terrier running beside a bloodhound, he still held his place alongside the gleaming locomotive of nickel and varnish.

The man gripped the wheel more firmly. He was still completely unsuspecting, and gave us a scornful look. He had decided, evidently, to show us what his sleigh could do. He stepped so hard on the accelerator that the exhaust roared again. But it was no good. He could not get by. Unsightly and ill-favoured, Karl stuck to him still.

The man stared down at us in astonishment. He could not believe his eyes—at a speed of over sixty miles an hour not to have shaken off this antiquated rattletrap! He glanced at his speedometer in bewilderment—there must be something wrong with the thing. He opened her out.

The two cars were now racing side by side along the straight road. After a few hundred yards a lorry came clattering up from the opposite direction. The Buick had to drop back behind us to let it pass. No sooner was he"

alongside again than a motor-hearse swept into view, wreath-ribbons trailing in the wind; once again he had to give way. Thereafter the course lay open.

In the meantime the man at the wheel had lost his arrogance; annoyed, lips compressed, he sat there leaning forward—the racing fever had got him and now his whole life depended on not being outdone by our little mongrel.

We, on the other hand, sat apparently unmoved in our seats. For us the Buick simply did not exist. Köster kept his eyes calmly fixed on the road; Lenz, though a bundle of excitement, took out a newspaper as if be had nothing better to do than just read.

A few minutes later Köster gave us a wink. Imperceptibly Karl slackened speed and the Buick came slowly up. Its broad gleaming mudguards urged past us. The exhaust sent a blast of blue smoke into our faces. Little by little he gained on us—twenty yards—then, as we had expected, red and perspiring but happy, the face of the owner showed in the window and grinned open triumph. He thought he had won.

But he could not leave it at that; he could not forgo his revenge. He waved us on—waved nonchalantly, like a victor.

"Otto," said Lenz warningly.

But he had no need to speak; at that moment Karl made one bound. The compressor shrieked. And suddenly the waving hand at the window disappeared—for Karl had accepted the invitation; he came. He came steadily, until at last we had recovered the lost ground; then for the first time we took notice of the stranger. In innocent inquiry we looked to the man at the wheel, as if to ask why he had signalled. But he kept his eyes rigidly turned away; and Karl, the triumphant guttersnipe, stiff with dirt, flapping mudguards, drew away at top speed.

"Well done, Otto," said Lenz to Köster. "There's one man won't enjoy his supper this evening."

The chases were the reason we did not change Karl's body. He had only to show himself on the road for someone to want to take a rise out of him. To other cars he was as a lame crow to a pack of hungry cats. Even the most peace-loving family coach felt incited to pass him; at the sight of such an old rattletrap dancing now before, now behind them, even the most staid of middle-aged beavers would be seized with racing-fever. For who was to know that within that ridiculous body pulsed the great heart of a racer?

Lenz maintained that Karl had an educative effect; he taught folk a proper respect for creative talent, that always lurks under ap unprepossessing

exterior. At least, so said Lenz—who also said of himself that he was the last of the romantics.

We pulled up in front of a little inn and got out of the car. The evening was beautiful and calm. The troughs of the furrows in the new-ploughed fields glowed purple; the ridges were brown and burning gold. Great clouds, like flamingoes, floated in the apple-green sky, and slender in the midst of them lay the sickle of the waxing moon. Distressfully bare still, yet full of the promise of bud, a hazel bough held the evening and dream in its arms. From the inn issued a smell of frying liver. Onions, too. Our hearts swelled.

Lenz followed the smell indoors. Satisfied, he came back. "You ought to see the chips! The best will be gone if you're not quick."

At that moment a car came humming along. We looked. It was the Buick. With a sharp jolt it stopped beside Karl.

"Hoopla!" said Lenz. We had had fights for the same reason before now.

The fellow got out. He was big and heavy and had on a soft, brown camel's-hair coat. Displeased, he took a long look at Karl, then pulled off a pair of thick, yellow gloves and came forward.

"What do you call it, your contraption?" he asked Köster, who stood nearest, with a face like a vinegar bottle.

We all three looked at him without replying. Evidently he took us for mechanics in our Sunday togs, out for a run on the quiet.

"Did you say something?" asked Otto finally in a dubious tone, to teach him to be more polite.

The chap flushed. "I asked about the car there," he announced abruptly in the same tone as before.

Lenz straightened himself up. His great nose flicked. He was extraordinarily particular about politeness in others. But before he could open his mouth, suddenly, as if by a ghostly hand, the second door of the Buick opened—a dainty foot slid out, a slim leg, a knee followed—then out stepped a girl and walked slowly toward us.

Surprised, we looked at one another. We had not noticed before that there was somebody else in the car. Lenz changed "his attitude immediately. He was smiles all over his freckled face. We were suddenly all smiling—why, God only knows.

The fat chap looked at us rather disconcerted. He became unsure of himself and evidently did not know, any more, what to make of the business.

"Binding," said he at last with a slight bow, as if this name at least were

something he could be sure of.

The girl had now come up. We became still more friendly.

"Show them the car, Otto," said Lenz, with a swift glance at Köster.

"Why not?" replied Otto, returning his glance with an amused twinkle.

"I should like very much to see it," said Binding, already more conciliatory. "Must be damned fast. Just wiped me right off the map."

The two went across to the parking place and Köster lifted up Karl's bonnet.

The girl did not go. Slim and silent she stood beside Lenz and me in the twilight. I expected Gottfried to profit by the opportunity and get busy like a bomb. He was made for such situations. But he seemed to have lost the faculty of speech. Ordinarily he could woo like a turkey cock—but now he just stood like a Carmelite monk on leave and did not stir.

"You must forgive us," said I at last. "We did not see you were in the car. Else we should not have behaved so absurdly just now."

The girl looked at me. "But why not?" she replied calmly, in a surprisingly deep voice. "There was nothing at all bad about it."

"Bad, no; but not quite fair. That car can do around two hundred kilometres."

She leaned forward a little and put her hands into the pockets of her coat. "Two hundred kilometres?" she asked.

"One hundred and eighty-nine point two, to be exact, official register," answered Lenz like a pistol shot proudly.

She laughed. "And we thought about sixty or seventy."

"Well, you see," said I, "you couldn't know, could you?"

"No," she replied, "we certainly couldn't. We thought the Buick was twice as fast as your car."

"That may be." I kicked aside a broken twig with my foot. "But we had too big an advantage. I dare say Herr Binding over there is pretty annoyed with us." She laughed again. "Oh yes, for a moment certainly. But one has to be able to lose once in a while."

"True."

There followed a pause. I glanced across at Lenz. But the last of the romantics merely grinned, twitched his nose, and left me to wallow.

The birch trees rustled. A cock crowed at the back of the house.

"Marvellous weather," said I at last to break the silence.

"Yes, splendid," replied the girl.

"And so mild," Lenz added.

"Quite unusually mild," I supplemented.

There followed a fresh pause. The girl must take us for a nice pair of muttons; but with the best will in the world nothing more occurred to me to say. Lenz was sniffing the air.

"Apple sauce," said he feelingly. "There's going to be apple sauce with the liver, apparently. A tasty dish."

"Doubtless," I agreed and cursed us both.

Köster and Binding came back. In the few minutes Binding had become a different man. He was beaming, apparently in a seventh heaven to have found in Köster an expert. He asked if we would dine with them.

"Of course," replied Lenz.

We went in. As we entered the door Lenz winked at me and nodded in the direction of the girl. "She cancels out ten of your dancing old witches, of this morning."

I gave a shrug. "Maybe—but in that case why did you leave me stuttering there like a fool?"

He laughed. "You must learn to swim for yourself sometime, baby."

"I've no wish to learn anything any more," said I. We followed the others. They were already seated at the table. The hostess arrived immediately with the liver and chipped potatoes. She brought as well a large bottle of rye whisky as an introduction.

Binding proved to be a perfect torrent of a talker. It was amazing all the things he found to say about motor cars. When he learned that Otto had actually done racing, his good will knew no restraint any more.

I looked at him more closely. He was a big, heavy fellow with bushy eyebrows above a ruddy face; a bit given to boasting, a bit noisy, and apparently good-humoured, like folk who have been successful in life. I could picture him before going to bed at night, solemnly, appreciatively, approvingly contemplating himself in the mirror.

The girl was seated between Lenz and me. She had taken off her coat and beneath it wore a grey English costume. About her neck was tied a white scarf that looked like a stock. Her hair was brown and silky and in the lamplight had an amber sheen. Her shoulders were very straight but inclined a little forward, her hands were slender, a bit long, and bony rather than soft.

Her face was narrow and pale, but the large eyes gave it an almost passionate strength. She looked very good, I decided—but I thought no more about it.

Lenz on the other hand was all fire and flame. He was completely changed from what he had been just now. His yellow head of hair shone like the hood of a hoopoe. He let off a whole firework of wise cracks and in company with Binding ruled the table. I just had to sit by and could do little to make myself noticed even—at most, pass a plate once or offer cigarettes. And touch glasses with Binding. I did that fairly often.

Lenz suddenly clapped his hand to his forehead: "The rum! Bob, go and fetch our birthday rum."

"Birthday? Is it someone's birthday?" asked the girl.

"Yes, mine," said I. "I've been plagued with it all day."

"Plagued? Then you won't be wanting my congratulations, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes," said I; "congratulations is another matter."

"Fine; then all the best."

For a moment I held her hand in mine and felt her warm, dry pressure. Then I went out to get the rum. The night stood big and silent about the little house. The leather seats of our car were moist. I stood and looked toward the horizon where the red glow of the city rose against the sky. I would gladly have stayed out there; but already I could hear Lenz calling.

Binding could not carry the rum. After the second glass one could see that. As he went out into the garden he rocked. I stood up and walked with Lenz into the bar. He asked for a bottle of gin.

"Wonderful girl, eh?" said he.

"Don't ask me, Gottfried," I replied. "Haven't paid that much attention."

He gazed at me a while with his iris-blue eyes and then shook his gleaming head. "What do you live for then, baby, tell me?"

"I've been asking myself that a long time," I answered.

He laughed. "You'd like me to tell you, I suppose. Well I won't right off, just like that. But I think I'll go and see if I can't dig out how the girl stands with Fatty, the auto catalogue."

He followed Binding out into the garden. After a while they both came back to the bar. The information must have been good, for Gottfried, who now apparently saw the road clear, from sheer pleasure joined up enthusiastically with Binding. The two got a fresh bottle of gin and an hour later were patting each other on the back like old friends. There was always something charming about Lenz, so that it was difficult to resist him when he

was in good humour. Indeed at such times he could hardly resist himself. Now he simply overflowed Binding, and soon the two of them were out in the arbour singing soldiers' songs. And in the meantime the girl had entirely forgotten the last of the romantics.

We three were now left alone in the inn parlour. It was suddenly very quiet. The cuckoo clock ticked. The hostess cleared away and looked down on us maternally. A brown retriever lay stretched, out in front of the stove. Now and then he would bark in his sleep, softly, high and plaintive. Outside the wind sighed past the window. Snatches of soldiers' songs drifted in; the little room seemed to lift us and float with us through the night and through the years, past many memories and half-forgotten things.

It was a strange feeling. Time seemed to have ceased to flow—it was no longer a river that came from the darkness and passed out into darkness again—it was a lake in which life was noiselessly mirrored. I held up my glass in my hand. The rum glowed. I thought of the account I had drawn up that morning in the workshop. I had been depressed then; I was so no longer. I looked at Köster. I heard him talking with the girl; but I did not attend to their words. I felt the first soft glow of intoxication that makes the blood warmer and spreads an illusion of adventure over uncertainty. Outside Lenz and Binding were singing the song of the Argonnerwald. Beside me the unknown girl was talking—she spoke softly and slowly in that deep, exciting, slightly hoarse voice. I emptied my glass.

The other two came in again. They had sobered a little in the open air. The party broke up. I helped the girl into her coat. She was standing immediately in front of me, lithely moving her shoulders to receive the cloak, her head thrown back and turned aside, her lips slightly open with a smile that was meant for no one directed to the ceiling. I lowered the cloak an instant. Where had my eyes been all this time? I suddenly understood Lenz's enthusiasm.

She turned half toward me inquiringly. Quickly I raised the cloak again and glanced across at Binding who was standing by the table, cherry-red and still with a rather glazed look in his eye.

"Do you think he is fit to drive?" I asked.

"I think so."

I looked at her steadily. "If he is not quite safe, one of us could go with

you."

She took out her powder compact and opened it. "It will be all right," said she. "He drives much better when he has had something to drink."

"Better, but not so carefully perhaps," I replied.

She looked at me over the top of her little mirror.

"Let's hope it will be all right," I said. I was overdoing it a bit, for Binding was standing quite tolerably on his pins. But I wanted to do something so that she would not just vanish entirely.

"Can I ring you in the morning perhaps, and hear how it went?" I asked.

She did not reply at once.

"I feel we are partly to blame with all our drinking," I persisted. "Me particularly, with my birthday rum."

She laughed. "All right, if you like. Western 2796."

I made a note of the number immediately we were outside. We watched Binding drive off and had a last glass. Then we let Karl off the leash. He swept along through the light March mist, the wind was strong and our breathing quick; the city came toward us, looming fiery in the darkness, and at last there rose out of the gloom, like a brilliantly lighted gay liner, "The Bar." We brought Karl alongside and dropped anchor. Golden flowed the cognac, the gin gleamed like aquamarine and the rum was life itself. Upright we sat on the high bar stools; the music chattered, the pulse of life was clear and strong; it beat bravely in our hearts; the cheerlessness of the beastly furnished rooms that awaited us, the hopelessness of existence, was forgotten; the counter of "The Bar" was the Captain's bridge of the Ship of Life, and we were set once more for the open sea.

Chapter II

The next day was a Sunday. I slept late and wakened only when the sun shone on my bed. I sprang out quickly and threw up the window. Outside it was fresh and clear. I set the spirit stove in the window seat and got out the coffee container. Frau Zalewski, my landlady, had given me permission to make my own coffee in my room. Hers was too thin—especially if one had been drinking the night before.

I had already been two years in her boarding establish ment. The locality pleased me. There was always some thing doing, for the Trades Hall, the Café International and the Salvation Army Barracks were all there cheek by jowl. And immediately fronting the house was an old grave yard, now in disuse. There were large trees as in a park, arid on still nights.one could think one was in the country. On the other hand, it was usually late before there was quiet; for next to the graveyard was an amusement park with roundabouts and swing-boats.

To Frau Zalewski the graveyard was a great asset. When letting a room she would comment on the excellence of the air and the openness of the outlook, and proceed to charge a higher rent in consequence. "But, sir, think of the situation!" was her invariable formula.

I dressed slowly. That gave me the feeling of Sunday. I washed; I strolled about the room, read the paper, brewed the coffee; I stood at the window and saw where the street had been taken up; I listened to the birds singing in the high trees in the graveyard opposite—little silvern pipes of God, they sang to the accompaniment of the melancholy, sweet drone of the barrel-organs at the Fair. I chose among my half-dozen shirts and socks with as much deliberation as if there had been twenty times the number; whistling, I turned out my pockets—small change, a. pocketknife, keys, cigarettes—and there, the slip of paper with the girl's name and the telephone number. Patricia Hollmann— an unusual Christian name, Patricia. I put it down on the table. Was that really only yesterday? How far off it seemed—forgotten almost in the pearl-grey fumes of alcohol. That is a remarkable thing about drinking: it brings people together so quickly, but between night and morning it sets an interval again of years.

I stuck the slip of paper under a pile of books. Should I ring? Maybe—

maybe not. These things always look different next morning. I was quite glad, as a matter of fact, to have a little peace. There had been enough trouble the last few years. Keep things at arm's length, Köster used to say. If you let anything come too near you want to hold on to it. And there is nothing a man can hold on to.

At that moment the usual Sunday morning hate started in the room next door. I looked about for my hat that I must have put away somewhere too carefully the night before, amToverheard what they were saying. It was Hasse and his wife slanging each other. For five years the two had been living here in one little room. They weren't bad folk. If they had had a three-roomed flat with a kitchen for the wife and a child thrown in, their marriage would probably have gone on quite well. But a flat costs money and a child in these insecure times—how could it be done! So there they sat on top of one another, the woman grown hysterical and the man in constant dread of losing his little job. If that happened he would be done for. He was already forty-five. No one would take him on again if he once got out of work. Such is the modern misery—formerly one went under slowly and there was always a chance still of coming up again—but in these days on the farther side of every dismissal yawns the abyss of permanent unemployment.

I tried to steal out quietly, but already there was a knock on the door and Hasse stumbled in. He dropped into a chair. He was a mild inoffensive chap with drooping shoulders and a little moustache. A modest, conscientious clerk. But they are just the ones who fare worst to-day. They have probably always fared worst. Modesty and conscientiousness receive their reward only in novels. In life they are exploited and then shoved aside.

Hasse raised his hands. "Think of it, two more dismissals at the office. I'll be next, you see if I'm not."

From one pay day to the next he lived in this fear. I poured him out a schnapps. His whole body was trembling. One day he would collapse, you could see that. He had not much resistance left.

"And always these reproaches," he whispered.

His wife had been blaming him, apparently, for the life she had to lead. She was forty-two, a bit spongy and faded, but of course not quite so used-up as the husband. She was suffering from eleventh-hour panic.

It was no use mixing in.

"Look, Hasse," said I, "you stay quietly here as long as you like. I must be going, there's cognac in the wardrobe if you prefer it. That's rum there.

Here are some newspapers. Then this afternoon take your wife out for a walk, anywhere, but out of the building. Go to the movies. It costs no more than a couple of hours at a Café and you have something for it afterwards. Forget is the word to-day, not brood."

I patted him on the shoulder, but with a poor conscience. Anyhow, the movies are always good. Everyone can dream something there.

The door of their room stood open. The woman was sobbing. I wandered down the passage. The next door was ajar. Listening. A cloud of scent issued from it. Erna Bönig, private secretary, lived there. Much too elegant for her salary; but then once a week her boss used to dictate letters to her until morning. And next day she would be in a foul temper. To compensate she went dancing every evening. When she couldn't dance any more she wouldn't want to live any more, she explained. She had two friends. One loved her and brought her flowers. The other she loved and gave money.

Next to her was Count Orlov, the riding master, a Russian emigré, waiter, film extra and gigolo, with grey side-whiskers. A virtuoso on the guitar. Every night he prayed to Our Lady of Kasan that he might get a job as receiving-clerk in a first-class hotel; and he was prone to weep when he got drunk.

Next door. Frau Bender. Nurse at a foundling hospital. Fifty years of age; husband killed in the war; two children died of underfeeding in 1918. Keeps a tabby cat. The only one on the floor.

Next—Müller, retired accountant, editor of the magazine of some philatelist society. A walking stamp collection, nothing more. A happy man.

On the last door I knocked. "Well, Georg," said I, "still nothing?"

Georg Block shook his head. He was a college student in his fourth semester. To enable himself to complete the course he had worked for two years in a mine. And now the money he had saved was almost gone; he had enough left to live only for two months. He could not take up mining again—there were too many miners out of work. He had tried every way to earn a little money. One whole week he spent delivering bills for a margarine concern, and then the concern went bankrupt. Shortly afterwards he got a job as a paper-boy and breathed again. Three days later he was set upon by two licensed vendors who took his papers from him and tore them up and warned him not to let them catch him plying a trade where he had no business. They had enough unemployed of their own. He went out again next morning as

before, notwithstanding he had had to pay for the papers that had been destroyed. A motorcyclist ran into him, and the papers were scattered in the mud. That cost another two marks. He tried a third time, only to return with his coat in ribbons and his face battered. Then he gave it up. Now he just sat in his room all day in despair, studying like mad, as if it could serve any useful purpose. He ate but once a day. Yet it was of no possible consequence whether he finished the course or not—even if he did pass, it would be at least ten years before he could reckon on getting a post.

I passed him a packet of cigarettes. "Why not chuck it, Georgie? I did, you know. One can always take it up again later." '

He shook his head. "No, unless one sticks at it one loses the knack. I found that out mining. I couldn't do it a second time."

The pale face, the protruding ears, the short-sighted eyes; the gaunt figure, the flat chest—my God!

"Well, good luck to you, Georgie."

And next the kitchen. A stuffed boar's head—souvenir of the late Zalewski. The telephone. Semi-darkness. An odour of gas and rancid fat. The door to the passage, with several visiting cards affixed beside the bell-button. My own among them: *Robert Lohkamp, stud, phil., two long rings.* The card was dirty and yellow with age. *"Stud, phil."* That's the stuff! A long time ago, that was. I set off down the stairs, to the Café International.

The International was a long, dark, smoky hole with several back rooms. Near the door by the bar was the piano. It was sadly out of tune, several of the wires were sprung, and the ivory was missing from some of the keys. But I was fond of it for all that. It was a game old crock, and had shared at least one year of my life with me, for it was here that I had been employed as pianist.

In the back rooms the cattlemen used to forgather from time to time, as did also the people from the amusement park. The pros'titutes used to sit near the door.

The barroom itself was empty, except for Alois, the flat-footed waiter, behind the counter. "The usual?" he asked.

I nodded. He brought me a glass of rum. I sat down at a table and stared vacantly into space. A grey band of light entered obliquely through an upper window, and was reflected in the schnapps bottles on the rack. The cherry brandy glowed like ruby.

Alois resumed his occupation of rinsing glasses. The cat of the proprietress was purring on top of the piano. I smoked a cigarette slowly. The

atmosphere made one drowsy. . . . What a strange voice that girl had, yesterday! Husky a bit, perhaps, but sweet, too.

"Bring us some newspapers, Alois," said I.

The door creaked. Rosa entered. Rosa, the graveyard pros'titute, otherwise known as "the Iron Steed"—a nickname in honour of her indomitableness. She had come, as was her custom on Sunday mornings, for a cup of chocolate. Afterwards she would be going out to Burgdorf to visit her child.

"Good day, Robert."

"Hello, Rosa. How's the youngster?"

"Just going to find out. Here—look what I'm taking her." From a bundle of paper she produced a doll with hectic red cheeks and proceeded to prod it in the stomach. "Mama," bleated the doll. Rosa beamed.

"Fine," said I.

"You wait though." She tilted the doll backwards. The eyes shut with a snap.

"Well, I never!"

Rosa was delighted and set about wrapping up the doll again. "You understand these things, Robert, I can see. You'll make a grand father some day."

"Think so?" said I dubiously.

Rosa lived for her child. Until three months ago, when it started to walk, Rosa had kept it in her room. She had contrived this in spite of her profession, by making use of a small closet adjoining her own room. When she came in at night with a lover, on some pretext or other she would leave him waiting outside, while she went in and hastily pushed the pram into the closet, and shut the door; then she would return and admit her cavalier. But during the month of December the child had to be turned out of the warm room into" the unheated closet too often, with the result that it would get chilled and begin to cry at precisely those times when she was entertaining a visitor.

Hard as it was, Rosa was obliged to part with her. She had placed the child in an expensive children's home, where she had given herself out for a respectable widow—had the authorities known the truth they would not have accepted the child.

Rosa stood up. "You are coming on Friday, of course?"

I nodded.

She looked at me. "You know what it is for?"

"Of course."

I had not the faintest idea; nor did I ask questions. I had made that a rule during my year here as pianist. It was much the best. By the same principle I used to treat all the girls with the same friendliness. My position would have been impossible otherwise.

"*Au revoir*, Robert."

"Cheerio, Rosa."

I stayed on a little longer. The International had become a sort of Sabbath rest to me, but to-day for some reason, I was unable to arrive at the peaceful somnolence that belonged to the place on Sundays. I had another glass of rum, stroked the cat and then left.

I traipsed about the city all day. I could not make out what was wrong with me. I was fidgety and could remain nowhere for long. Late in the afternoon I looked in at the workshop. Köster was there at work on the Cadillac. We had bought it dirt cheap at a sale a short time ago. It had been thoroughly overhauled and Köster was just giving the final touches. It was a speculation. We hoped to make some money with it, but I was doubtful about our finding a purchaser. In bad times people want small cars, not omnibuses like this one.

"I'm afraid well be landed with it, Otto," said I.

But Köster was hopeful. "It is the medium-sized car one gets left with, Bob," he explained. "There is a market for cheap cars, and for quite expensive ones. There are still plenty of people with money; or who like to look as if they have it."

"Where is Gottfried? "I asked.

"At some political meeting or other."

"The man's mad. What does he want there?"

Köster laughed. "Doesn't know that himself, I imagine.

Got a touch of spring in the blood like as not. And he must be always haring after some new thing." "Maybe," said I. "Anything I can do?" We tinkered around until it was too dark to see. "I think we'll call that a go," said Köster. We washed off the grime.

"Guess what I have here," he said, patting a wallet in his pocket.

"No idea."

"Tickets for the fight to-night. Two. Coming?"

I hesitated. He looked at me in surprise.

"Stilling is boxing," said he, "against Walker. Be a good fight."

"Take Gottfried," I suggested, feeling a fool not to be going. But I had no wish to go, I didn't know why.

"Got something on?"

"No."

He looked at me.

"I think I'll go home," said I. "Letters to write and so on. One has to sometimes. . . ."

"Not ill, are you?" he asked anxiously.

"Not in the least. A touch of spring in the blood, too, perhaps."

"All right. As you like."

I strode along home. Seated once again in my room, I could think of nothing I wanted to do. I got up and roamed about. I was completely at a loss to know why I had wanted to come. Finally I set off down the passage to visit Georg. On the way I ran into Frau Zalewski.

"Gracious me!" she exclaimed, taken aback. "You here?"

"That would be difficult to deny," said I rather irritably.

"Not out!" She wagged her head of grey curls. "Wonder of wonders!"

I did not stay long with Georg. In a quarter of an hour I was back again. I discussed with myself whether or not to have a drink. I did not feel like it. I sat in the window and surveyed the street.

Dusk flitted on bat's wings over the graveyard. The sky behind the Trades Hall was green as unripe apples. The street lamps were already lighted, though it was hardly dark yet—they looked as if they were freezing. I rummaged under my books for the slip of paper with the telephone number. At last. . . . It could do no harm to ring up. After all, I did more or less promise to. Probably the girl wouldn't be at home anyway.

I went into the passage where the telephone was, took up the receiver and asked for a number. While I awaited an answer I felt a pleasant expectancy welling up out of the black earpiece. The girl was in. Then when the deep, slightly husky voice spoke out suddenly like a ghost into the smell of fat and clatter of dishes from Frau Zalewski's parlour—a soft voice speaking slowly, as if it pondered each word—all my discontent vanished. I hung up the receiver after making an appointment for the day after to-morrow. Life suddenly seemed no longer pointless. "Crazy," thought I and shook my head.

Then I took up the receiver once more and spoke to Köster.

"Have you got the tickets still, Otto?"

"Yes."

"Good. I'm coming to the fight then."

Afterwards we wandered a long time through the city. The streets, though lit, were deserted. Electric signs glowed; lights burned in the shop windows to no purpose. In one were naked wax dummies with painted heads. They looked ghostly and perverted. Next door was a sparkle of jewellery. Then a department store, floodlit, standing out white like a cathedral, its show windows foaming with gay-coloured silks. Pale, half-starved figure's were crouched outside a picture house; and alongside, a ham-and-beef shop spread its splendours: canned fruits piled high into tin towers, peaches bedded in wadding, fat geese strung on a line like so much washing, loaves of brown bread among highly seasoned ham sausages, and, central in it all, gleaming pink and pale yellow, liver patties and sliced salmon.

We sat down on a seat near the park. The night was cool and the moon stood like an arc lamp over the roofs of the houses. It was already past midnight. Workmen repairing the tram lines had pitched a tent on the pavement hard by. The bellows hissed and showers of sparks rained down upon the solemn, bowed figures. Alongside stood cauldrons of tar smoking like field-kitchens.

We sank into a brown study.

"Queer sort of day, Sunday, Otto."

Köster nodded.

"One is glad when it's over," said I meditatively.

Köster shrugged his shoulders. "Perhaps it is that one is so used to the routine that one finds the little bit of freedom disturbing."

I turned up my coat collar. "Doesn't say much for the life we lead, Otto."

He looked at me and smiled. "There was less to be said for it a few years ago, Bob."

"True," I agreed. "Still . . ."

The acid light of the pneumatic drill squirted green over the asphalt. The workmen's shelter with its inner glow looked like a cosy little country to itself.

"Do you think the Cadillac will be ready by Tuesday?" I asked.

"Perhaps," said Köster. "Why?"

"I was just wondering. . . ."

We stood up and turned homeward. "I've been a bit snarled-up to-day, Otto," said I.

"Everybody is now and then," said'Köster. "Sleep well, Bob."

"Good night, Otto."

In my room I continued to sit awhile. Suddenly I did not like the place any more. The chandelier—hideous— the light so glaring; and the armchairs, threadbare: the linoleum, utterly dreary; the wash stand—you could never invite any decent person here, I thought. Not a woman certainly. A prostitute from the International at the most.

Chapter III

On Tuesday morning we were sitting in the courtyard in front of the workshop having breakfast. The Cadillac was finished. Lenz was holding a sheet of paper in his hand and looking at us with an air of triumph. He was our advertising manager and had just read out to us an ad which he had composed for the sale of the car. It began with the words "Luxury. Take your holidays in the sunny South," and was a cross between a love song and a hymn.

Köster and I were silent awhile. One needed time to recover from such a deluge of flowery fancy. Lenz supposed we were overcome.

"The thing has poetry and punch, eh?" he said proudly. "In times of realism be romantic, that's the trick. Opposites attract."

"Not where money is concerned," I replied.

"People don't buy automobiles to save money, my boy," explained Gottfried superiorly. "They buy them to lay out money; and that's where romance starts, at any rate for a businessman. For the majority of people it even stops there. What do you say, Otto?"

"Well, you know—" began Köster cautiously.

"Why waste time talking, Otto," I interposed. "That's an ad for a watering place or a beauty cream, not for a motor car."

Lenz opened his mouth.

"Just a moment," I went on. "You think we're prejudiced, I suppose. Well, let me make you an offer—we'll ask Jupp. There speaks the voice of the people."

Jupp was our only employee, a lad of fifteen, who had a sort of apprentice job with us. He served the petrol pump, got our breakfast, and cleared up at night. He was small, covered with freckles, and had the largest outcrop of ears I have ever known. Köster declared that if Jupp should ever fall out of an aeroplane he would come to no harm. His ears would enable him to glide safely to earth.

We called him up. Lenz read him the advertisement.

"Would you be interested in such a car, Jupp?" asked Köster.

"A car?" demanded Jupp.

I laughed. "Of course a car," growled Lenz. "What do you think, a hippopotamus?"

"Has it synchronized gears, fluid flywheel, hydraulic brakes?" enquired Jupp, unmoved.

"Muttonhead, it's our Cadillac, of course," snorted Lenz.

"You don't say!" retorted Jupp, grinning from ear to ear.

"There you have it, Gottfried," said Köster. "That's modern romance."

"Go back to your pump, Jupp, you damned son of the twentieth century."

Grumbling, Lenz vanished into the office again—to give to his advertisement just so much technical detail as was compatible with the preservation of its poetic swing.

A few minutes later Inspector Barsig appeared in the door of the courtyard. We received him with great deference. He was engineer and surveyor for the Phoenix Motor Insurance Company—an important man for getting a line on repair jobs. We stood well with him. As engineer he was keen as the devil and let nothing pass, but as collector of butterflies he was as soft as butter. He had a large collection and we had once given him a big moth that flew into our workshop one night. When we presented him with the thing he turned quite pale with excitement. It was a death's-head, of extreme rarity apparently, that was still wanting from his collection. He had never forgotten that, and ever since had seen to it that we got our fair share of any jobs that were going. In exchange we caught for him every moth we could lay hands on.

"A vermouth, Herr Barsig?" asked Lenz politely, who had come to the surface once more.

"No alcohol before sundown," replied Barsig. "A fixed rule with me."

"Rules have to be broken, or the observance gives no pleasure," explained Lenz, filling a glass. "To the future of the privet hawk moth, the peacock butterfly, and the fritillaries!"

Barsig wavered a moment.

"Put it that way and I can't say no," said he, taking the glass. "But in that case we must drink also to the small ox-eye." He smiled in an embarrassed way. "You'll be pleased to hear I've discovered a new variety. With pectinate antennae."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Lenz. "Hats off! So now you are a pioneer

and will be in all the histories!"

We drank another to the pectinate antennae. Barsig wiped his moustache.

"I have good news for you, too. Come round and fetch the Ford. The management has agreed you can have the repairs."

"Fine," said Köster. "We can do with it. And what about the estimate?"

"Approved too."

"No cuts?"

Barsig closed one eye. "They were inclined to be difficult at first. But in the end . . ."

"A glass to the Phoenix Insurance," said Lenz and poured out another round.

Barsig rose to go.

"It's a queer business," said he as he was leaving.

"You remember the woman who was in the Ford? She died a couple of days ago. Very slight injuries, only cuts. Loss of blood apparently."

"How old was she?" asked Köster.

"Thirty-four," replied Barsig; "four months gone. Insured for twenty thousand marks!"

We set off at once to fetch the car, which belonged to a master baker. The chap had been half drunk and had run into a wall in the dark. Only his wife was injured; he didn't get so much as a scratch.

He looked in at the garage while we were making the car ready to take it away. Fat shoulders and bull neck, head bent forward slightly, sagging, he stood watching us for some time without saying a word. What with the unhealthy, pallid grey face that bakers have, in the gloom he looked like a great melancholy weevil. He came forward slowly.

"When will it be done?" he asked.

"In about three weeks," replied Köster.

The fellow pointed to the hood. "That's thrown in, of course?"

"I don't follow you," said Otto. "It's not damaged that I can see."

The master baker made a gesture of impatience. "I didn't say it was. What I mean is, I want a new hood. I take it this is a good cop for you? We understand one another, I suppose?"

"Not in the least," replied Köster.

He understood only too well. The chap wanted to get a new hood, for

which the insurance company was not liable, out of us. We argued the toss for some time, but the fellow threatened to cancel the job and get an estimate from some more obliging firm. Finally Köster gave in. He would not have, had we not been in sore need of the job.

"You see, so why not at the beginning?" said the baker with a cunning smile. "I'll look round in a few days' time to choose the material. Beige, I think. Soft colour."

We drove off. When we were outside, Lenz pointed to the seat of the Ford. There were large black stains on it. "The blood of his wife. And he swindles a new hood out of it! 'Beige,' by God! 'Soft colour!' Hats off! I wouldn't put it past him to have claimed insurance for two. Didn't Barsig say the woman was pregnant?"

Köster shrugged his shoulders. "I suppose he would say business is business, and the one thing has nothing to do with the other."

"Maybe," said Lenz, "but, you know, there are people who can draw real comfort out of misfortune. Anyway, it's going to cost us fifty marks off our takings."

In the afternoon I made a pretext to go home. I had an appointment around five o'clock with Patricia Hollmann, but I said nothing about that at the workshop. Not that I wanted to conceal it; but it struck me all at once as rather unlikely.

She had given me as the meeting place a certain café. I did not know it; I only knew it was a small, elegant affair. Unsuspecting I went in. But I started back in horror as I entered. The room was full to overflowing with jabbering women. I had landed into a typical dames' teashop. With some difficulty I succeeded in snaffling a table which had just been vacated. Uncomfortably I glanced around. Besides myself there were only two other men there, and I did not like the look of them.

"Coffee, tea or chocolate?" asked the waiter, whisking several cake crumbs off the table onto my suit with his serviette.

"A large cognac," I replied.

He brought it. But he brought with him at the same time a bevy of coffee drinkers in search of a place, headed by a female athlete of uncertain age wearing a woeful-looking hat.

"Four? This way, please," said he, and indicated my table.

"One moment—" I answered. "This table is taken. I'm waiting for someone."

"Not allowed, sir," said the waiter. "No seats can be reserved at this hour."

I looked at him. Then I looked at the athlete, now standing close by the table and clutching the arm of a chair. I saw her face and gave up at once all thought of further resistance. Not with a set of howitzers would one have deterred this person in her determination to take possession of the table.

"Anyway you can bring me another cognac, eh?" I growled at the waiter.

"Very well, sir. Another large one?"

"A very large one, see!"

"Certainly, sir." He bowed. "It is a table for six persons, you see, sir," said he apologetically.

"Very good. Only bring the cognac."

The athlete appeared to belong to a temperance club as well. She glared at my schnapps as if it were stinking fish. To annoy her I ordered another and glared back. The whole business suddenly struck me as absurd. What did I want here? And what did I want with the girl? I didn't know even if in all the hubbub and jabber I should recognize her anyway.

Vexed, I tipped down my cognac.

"Salut," said somebody behind me.

I started up. There she stood, laughing. "You've begun in good time."

I put the glass that I still had in my hand, down on the table. I was suddenly bewildered. The girl looked entirely different from what I remembered. Among the multitude of café-eating, well-fed women she looked like a slim young Amazon, cool, radiant, sure and unapproachable.

"That will never go with us," thought I, and said: "And where did you spring from so mysteriously? I've been watching the door all the time."

She pointed over to the right. "There's another entrance over there. But I am late. Have you been waiting long?"

"Not at all. Two or three minutes at the most. I've only just arrived myself."

The coffee club at my table had become quiet. I felt the appraising glances of four sober matrons on my back. "Shall we stay here?" I asked.

With a swift glance the girl surveyed the table. Her mouth twitched. She looked at me with amusement. "Cafés are all alike, I'm afraid."

I shook my head. "They are better when they are empty. This place is a devil of a hole, it gives one an inferiority complex. We would do better to go to a bar."

"A bar. Are there bars open in broad daylight then?"

"I know one," said I. "They are peaceful at any rate. If you like that—"

"Oh, do I?"

I looked at her. I could not for the moment decide how she meant that. I had nothing against irony if it was not against me; but I always had a bad conscience.

"All right, let's go then," said she.

I beckoned the waiter. "Three large cognacs," bawled the bird of ill omen in a voice as if he would settle accounts with a guest in the grave. "Three marks thirty."

The girl turned round. "Three cognacs in three minutes? Good going."

"That includes two from yesterday," I explained hastily.

"What a liar!" hissed the athlete at the table behind me. She had kept silence long enough.

I turned and bowed. "Happy Christmas, ladies." Then I went quickly.

"Have you been quarrelling?" asked the girl when we were outside.

"Not specially. I merely have an unfavorable effect on ladies in good circumstances."

"Me too," she replied.

I looked at her. She appeared to me as from another world. I simply could not imagine what she was or how she lived.

In the bar I was on surer ground. Fred, the mixer, was standing behind the counter in the act of polishing the big cognac swill glass, as we entered. He greeted me as if he were seeing me for the first time and had not had to take me home only two nights ago. He was trained in a good school and had a vast experience behind him.

The room was empty except for one table where, as usual, sat Valentin Hauser. I knew him from the war; we had been in the same company. He once brought me a letter to the front line because he supposed it was from my mother. He knew I was expecting one, for my mother had recently undergone an operation. But he was mistaken—it was merely an advertisement for a new warm trench cap made from stinging-nettles. On his way back he had been hit

in the leg.

Shortly after the war Valentin had come into a little money, and had been drinking it ever since. He considered it his duty to celebrate his good luck in having come out alive. It was nothing to him that that was now several years ago. One could never celebrate it enough, he used to explain. He was one of those with an uncanny memory of the war. The rest of us had forgotten many things; but he remembered every day and every hour.

I saw that he had already had a good deal, for he was sitting vacantly in his corner, completely submerged. I raised my hand.

"Salut, Valentin."

He looked up and nodded. *"Salut*, Bob."

We sat down in a corner. The mixer came.

"What will you drink?" I asked the girl.

"A Martini perhaps," she replied. "A dry Martini."

"Fred is a specialist in that," said I.

Fred permitted himself a smile.

"The usual for me," said I.

The bar was cool and dark, with a smell of spilled gin and cognac—a rooty smell, as of juniper and bread. From the ceiling hung a wooden model of a sailing-ship. The wall behind the bar was faced with copper. The dimmed light from a sconce cast red reflections in it as if some subterranean fire were mirrored there. Of the smaller wrought-iron brackets on the wall only two were lighted—one near Valentin and another by us. They had yellow parchment shades made from old maps and looked like narrow illuminated sections of the world.

I was a bit embarrassed and at a loss how to start a conversation. I hardly knew the girl, and the longer I looked at her the stranger she was. It was a long time since I had been together with anyone like this; I was out of practice. I was more accustomed to knock about with men. In the café just now it had been too noisy—and now here it was suddenly too quiet. The stillness of the room gave to every word such weight that it was hard to talk easily. I began to wish myself back in the café. . . .

Fred brought the glasses, and we drank. The rum was strong and fresh, and tasted of the sun. That was something to the good. I emptied my glass and at once ordered another.

"Do you like it here?" I asked.

The girl nodded.

"Better than the pastry shop?"

"I hate pastry shops," said she.

"Then why ever did we meet there of all places?" I asked in surprise.

"I don't know." She took off her cap. "Nothing else occurred to me."

"So much the better that you like it here. We are often here. Of evenings this place is almost a sort of home for us."

She smiled. "Isn't that rather a pity?"

"No," said I, "it suits the times."

Fred brought me the second glass. He placed a green Havannah beside it on the table. "From Herr Hauser."

Valentin signalled from his corner and raised his glass. "Thirty-first of July, 'seventeen," said he in a thick voice.

I nodded to him and raised my glass.

He must always be drinking to somebody. I met him one night in a country inn drinking to the moon; he was celebrating some day or other in the trenches when things had been particularly sticky, and he was thankful to be alive still and able to sit there.

"He is an old friend of mine," I explained to the girl, "a pal from the war. He is the only man I know who has known how to extract a small happiness out of a great misfortune. He does not know any more what to do with his life —so he rejoices simply that he is still alive."

She looked at me thoughtfully. A band of light fell across her forehead and her lips. "I can understand that right enough," said she.

I looked up. "Well, you ought not to be able to. You are much too young."

She smiled. A slight, hovering smile in the eyes only. Her face hardly changed expression; merely became clearer, as from" within brighter.

"Too young," said she. "What a thing to say! It seems to me one is never too young. Only always too old."

I remained silent a moment.

"There's a lot might be said on the other side," I replied at last, and made a sign to Fred to bring me something more to drink. The girl was,so assured and independent; I felt like a block of wood in comparison. I would like to have started some light, gay conversation, a really good conversation, the sort that usually occurs to one afterwards when one is alone again. Lenz could do it; but with me it always became awkward and laboured. It was not without justice that Gottfried maintained that as an entertainer I was about on the level

of a postmistress.

Fred fortunately was an understanding fellow. Instead of the usual thimble he brought me a decent wineglass full. It saved him trotting backwards and forwards all the time and it wouldn't be so obvious how much I drank. I had to drink else I should never get shot of this stockish prosiness.

"Wouldn't you have another Martini?" I asked the girl.

"What is that you are drinking, then?"

"This? This is rum."

She looked at my glass. "That is the same as you had just now."

"Yes," said I, "I mostly drink rum."

She shook her head. "I just can't believe that it can taste good."

"I really don't know what it tastes like any more," said I.

She looked at me. "Then what do you drink it for?"

"Rum," said I—happy to have found something I could talk about—"rum has very little to do with taste. It isn't just a simple drink—it is a-friend, more. A friend who makes everything easier. It changes the world. And so one drinks it, of course—" I pushed the glass aside. "But shouldn't I order you another Martini?"

"Make it a rum, rather," said she. "I should like to try it, once."

"Good," said I, "but not this time. It is too heavy to start with. Bring a Bacardi cocktail," I called across to Fred.

Fred brought the glasses. He brought also a dish with salted almonds and black baked coffee beans. "Leave me my bottle here, will you?" said I.

Little by little things began to assume a new aspect. The sense of insecurity vanished, words came of themselves, I was no longer so painfully conscious of everything I said, drank on and felt the great soft wave approach and embrace me; the dark hour began to fill with pictures and stealthily the noiseless procession of dreams appeared again superimposed on the dreary, grey landscape of existence. The walls of the bar receded and suddenly it was no longer the bar— it was a little corner of the world, a haven of refuge, a dugout around which the eternal battle of chaos was raging and in which we two sat sheltering, mysteriously drifted to one another through the twilight of time.

The girl was sitting curled up in her chair, a stranger, mysterious, as if cast up here from the other side of life. I heard myself speaking, but it was as

if it were no longer myself, as if now some other person were talking, someone. I should like to have been. The words were not true any more, they took on other meanings, pressed on into other, more brightly coloured regions than were to be found in the little happenings of my life. I knew they were not true too, that they had turned to fancy and lies; but I did not care—the truth was cheerless and drab, and only the sense and the glamour of the dream was life.

In the copper vat on the counter the light was glowing. Off and on Valentin raised his glass and murmured a date into the empty air. Outside the muffled roar of the street poured on, punctuated with the vulture cries of motorcars. They screamed in whenever anyone opened the door. They screamed like a nagging, jealous old woman.

It was already dark when I brought Patricia Hollmann home. Slowly I walked back. I felt myself suddenly alone and empty. A fine rain was spraying down. I halted in front of a shop window. I had had too much to drink, I could feel it now. Not that I reeled—but I knew it definitely.

I felt hot. I unbuttoned my coat and pushed back my hat. It had caught me napping once again. Blast it all—of all the god-damn things I'd been saying! They would not bear thinking of. And I couldn't remember them; that was the worst. Here, alone in the street roaring with buses, it all looked quite different from the way it had in the semi-darkness of the bar. I cursed myself. A nice impression the girl must have got of me! She was sure to have noticed. She hardly drank anything herself. And she had given me such a queer look when we parted. . . .

Herrgott! I swung round. As I did so I bumped into a fat little man.

—"Eh?" said I peevishly.

"Keep your eyes open, can't you, you bucking broomstick!" barked the fat man.

I stared at him.

"Never seen a human being before, I suppose, eh?" he snapped again.

He was just my mark.

"Human beings, yes," said I, "but not beer barrels that walk."

"Streak of misery!" said he.

"Fat old fool," I responded.

Solemnly he raised his hat. "Pass friend," said he, and we parted.

The exchange of courtesies refreshed me, but my vexation remained. Indeed it got worse the soberer I became. I felt as clever as a wet towel. But gradually I ceased to be annoyed with myself alone: I was annoyed with everything —the girl included. It was her fault that I had got drunk. I turned up my coat collar. She could think what she liked for all of me, I didn't care— who was she anyway? The whole show could go to the devil for all I cared, too— what was done, was done. There was nothing more to be done about it. And just as well, probably. . . .

I went back to the bar and this time got drunk properly.

Chapter IV

The weather turned warm and wet and it rained steadily for several days. Then it cleared and the sun shone down with a sultry brooding warmth. When I arrived at the workshop on Friday morning, I found Matilda Stoss, her broom clamped under her arm, standing in the middle of the yard like a mesmerized hippopotamus.

"Just look, Herr Lohkamp, isn't that gorgeous? Every time it's a fresh miracle."

I stood in astonishment—the old plum tree by the petrol pump had blossomed overnight.

There it had stood, bent and bare, all winter; we used to hook up old tyres in it and stand oil cans to drain in its branches; it had been just a convenient rack on which to hang everything from polishing-rags to engine-bonnets. Only a few days ago our newly washed dungarees were flapping from its branches; even so late as yesterday there had been nothing specially noticeable about it; and now suddenly overnight, it had been transformed, enchanted into a shimmering cloud of pink and white, a cloud of bright blossoms, as if a swarm of butterflies had suddenly settled on our grimy workshop.

"And the smell!" said she, rolling her eyes with enthusiasm. "Marvellous! Just like rum."

I smelt nothing, but I understood immediately. "Smells like customers' cognac to me," I suggested.

She denied it emphatically. "You must have a cold, Herr Lohkamp. Or is it polyps, perhaps? Almost everyone has polyps nowadays. No, old Stoss has a nose like a bloodhound; you take it from me, it's rum, old rum."

"All right, Matilda. . . ."

I poured out a glass of rum and then went out to the petrol pump. Jupp was already sitting there. In a rusty jam tin beside him he had several sprays of blossom. "What's this in aid of?" I asked in surprise.

"For the ladies," explained Jupp. "When they fill up they get a spray gratis. I've sold ninety litres more already. The tree is worth its weight in gold.

If we didn't have it we'd have to make an artificial one."

"You've the making of a smart businessman, boy," said I.

He grinned. The sun shone through his ears so that they looked like stained-glass windows.

"I've been photographed twice too," he went on. "With the tree for background."

"Good for you, you'll be a film star yet," said I, and walked across to the pit where Lenz was crawling out from under the Ford.

"Bob," said he, "something's just occurred to me. We must be getting busy about that girl of Binding's."

I stared at him. "What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. What are you staring for anyway?"

"I'm not staring—"

"I say you are staring. What was her name exactly? Pat—but Pat what?"

He straightened up. "You don't know? but you wrote down her address. I saw you myself."

"I lost the bit of paper," I explained.

"Lost!" He seized his yellow hair with both hands. "After my spending a solid hour outside with Binding! Lost! Well, perhaps Otto knows."

"Otto doesn't know either," said I.

He looked at me. "You miserable dilettante! You're worse than that. Don't you know, then, that that was a wonderful girl? *Hergott!"* He stared at the sky. "When for once in our lives a bit of all right runs across our track, a dismal bonehead like you must go and lose the address."

"She didn't strike me as anything so wonderful," said I.

"That's because you're an ass," replied Lenz; "a twerp, who can recognize nothing above the level of a whore from the Café International. A pianist, that's what you are. Let me tell you once more, that was a windfall, a real windfall, that girl. You have no idea about such things, of course! Did you look at her eyes? Of course you didn't—you looked at your schnapps glass."

"Oh, you shut up," I interrupted, for with the mention of schnapps he touched me on the raw.

"And her hands," he went on, without paying any attention—"slender, long hands like a mulatto's—Gottfried understands these things, Gottfried knows. Holy Moses! A girl at last, as girls ought to be—beautiful, of course, and, what is more important, with atmosphere-r-" He interrupted himself. "Do

you know, for instance, what that is—atmosphere?"

"Air, that you pump into a tyre," said I.

"Of course," said he pityingly. "Air, of course! Atmosphere, aura, radiance, warmth, mystery—it's what gives beauty a soul and makes it alive. But what's the use—your atmosphere is the smell of rum—"

"Now stop, or I'll drop something on your head," I growled.

But Gottfried still talked and I did nothing to him. He had of course no notion of what had happened and that every word found a mark—especially that about the drink. I had just about gotten over it, and was consoling myself pretty well; and now he must dig it all up again. He went on praising and praising the girl until soon I began to feel that I had really lost irretrievably something extraordinary.

At six o'clock I went disgruntled to the Café International. That was my old refuge; Lenz had been right when he said so.

When I got there, to my surprise there was an immense activity. On the counter were iced cakes and plum cakes, and flat-footed Alois was running with a tray laden with rattling coffee-cups to the back room.

I halted. Coffee, by the canful? There must be a whole tribe of drunks under the table, out there.

But the hostess explained. To-day in the back room they were holding the farewell party to Rosa's friend Lilly. I clapped my hand to my forehead. But of course, I was invited! The only man too, as Rosa had significantly said — for Kiki, the pansy, who was also to be there, did not count. I went out again swiftly and bought a bunch of flowers, a pineapple, a child's rattle, and a slab of chocolate.

Rosa received me with the smile of a great lady. She was wearing a heavy low-necked dress and sat enthroned at the head of the table. Her gold teeth flashed again. I enquired how her little one was, and for it presented her with the celluloid rattle and the bar of chocolate. Rosa beamed.

With the pineapple and the flowers I turned to Lilly: "With my best wishes."

"He always was a cavalier," said Rosa; "and now come, Bob, sit between us two."

Lilly was Rosa's best friend. She had a brilliant career behind her. She had been what is the unattainable ambition of every little pros'titute, a hotel

woman. A hotel woman does not walk the streets—she lives in the hotel and makes her acquaintances there. Very few reach those heights—they have not enough clothes or enough money to be able to wait long for a suitor. True, Lilly had only been in a provincial hotel; but in the course of the years she had saved almost four thousand marks. Now she meant to get married. Her future husband had a small plumbing business. He knew all about her but he did not mind. And he would not have to worry for the future; when one of these girls does marry, she is to be trusted. They know the rough-and-tumble and have had enough of it.

Lilly was to be married on Monday. To-day Rosa was giving her a farewell coffee-party. They had all turned up to be with Lilly once more. Once married she would not be able to come here again.

Rosa poured me out a cup of coffee. Alois came trotting up with an enormous cake all peppered over with currants and almonds and angelica. She laid a great slice in front of me.

I knew what I had to do. Expertly I sampled a bite and registered utmost astonishment.

"Donnerwetter, but this was certainly never bought in a shop!"

"Made it myself," said Rosa, delighted. She was a wonderful cook and liked one to recognize it. Especially at goulash and plum cake she was unrivalled. She did not come from Bohemia for nothing.

I looked around. There they sat about the table, workers in God's vineyard, unparalleled connoisseurs of human nature, soldiers of love: Wally, the beautiful, whose white fox somebody had stolen recently during a night ride in a taxi; Lina with the wooden leg, who yet always found a lover; Fritzi, the gay, who was in love with the flat-footed Alois, though she could have had a house of her own and a friend, whom she refused; Margot of the red cheeks who always wore housemaid's clothes and thereby picked up smart lovers; Marion, the youngest, radiant and carefree; Kiki, who did not count as a man because he wore women's clothes and made up; Mimi, the poor creature, who with her forty-five years and varicose veins found the going always hard; a couple of barmaids, and some dining partners whom I did not know; and finally, the second guest of honour, little, grey and shrivelled as a winter apple— "Mother," the confidante of everybody, comfort and support of all night walkers. Mother of the sausage stall at the corner of Nikolaistrasse, at night a travelling kitchen and exchange bureau, where together with her Frankfort sausages she sold on the quiet cigarettes and rubber goods, and

could always be counted on for a loan.

I understand the etiquette. Not a word of shop, no indelicate suggestion to-day; forgotten Rosa's remarkable prowess that had earned her the nickname of the "Iron Horse"; forgotten Fritzi's discussions with Stefan Grigoleit, the cattle dealer, on the subject of love; forgotten Kiki's dances around the *brezel* basket in the early hours of the morning. The conversation here would have done credit to a mothers' meeting.

"Everything ready, Lilly?" I asked.

She nodded. "I've had my trousseau a long while."

"A wonderful trousseau, she has," said Rosa. "Antimacassars even!"

"Antimacassars? What; are they for?" I asked.

"Oh, come, Bob!" Rosa looked at me so reproachfully that I immediately explained I knew, of course, what they were: lace covers, crocheted furniture ornaments, the symbol of little bourgeois respectability, the sacred symbol of married love and paradise lost. They were none of them pros'titutes by temperament; they were the wreckage of middle class existence. Their secret ambition was not vice, it was the marriage bed. But they would never have admitted it.

I sat down to the piano. Rosa had been waiting for that. She was, like all these girls, fond of music. As a farewell gesture I played all her and Lilly's favourite songs. To begin with, "The Maiden's Prayer." The title was perhaps not specially suited to the place, but it was a tune with plenty of go and jingle. Then followed "The Birds' Evensong," "Alpine Glow," "When Love Dies," "Harlequin's Millions," and finally "Home, Sweet Home." Rosa was particularly fond of that one. pros'titutes are at one and the same time the hardest and the most sentimental of people. They all joined in, Kiki singing contralto.

Lilly got up to go. She must go and collect her bridegroom. Rosa gave her a resounding kiss. "Good luck, Lilly. Don't take it too hard."

Laden with presents, she left us. God knows, but she had quite a different look from before. The hard-bitten expression, common to all who have to do with human baseness, was wiped away; her face had softened; it actually had again something virgin.

We were standing in the door waving to Lilly when Mimi suddenly started blubbering. She had been married herself, but her husband had died of pneumonia in the war. If he had been killed, she complained, she would have had a small pension and would not have had to go on the streets.

Rosa patted her on the back. "Hell, Mimi, don't lose heart. Come and let's have another drop of coffee."

The entire party turned back into the International like so many hens into a pen. But the right atmosphere was there no more. "Play us one more to finish, Bob," said Rosa. "Something to buck us up."

Then I also took my leave. Rosa slipped some more cake into my pocket. I presented it to "Mother's" son, who was already setting up the sausage stall for the evening.

I considered what I should do. I did not want to go to "The Bar" in any case; nor to the cinema. What about the workshop? I looked at my watch. Eight o'clock. Köster must be back by now; if he was there, Lenz would not go on jawing by the hour about the girl again. I went.

There was light in the shed. And not in the shed alone— the whole courtyard was flooded. Köster was there by himself.

"What is this in aid of, Otto?" said I. "Sold the Cadillac?"

Köster laughed. "No, Gottfried's doing a bit of floodlighting, that's all."

Both headlamps of the Cadillac were on and the car had been shoved forward so that the beam shone through the window into the yard and fell directly upon the plum tree. It looked marvellous standing there, so chalky white, the darkness like a black lake lapping about it on either side.

"A grand show," said I. "But where is he?"

"Gone to fetch some grub."

"Good," said I. "I am feeling a bit low myself. It's probably only hunger."

Köster nodded. "Eat while you can, Bob; the old soldier's first law. I went off the rails myself this afternoon —entered Karl for the race."

"What?" said I. "On the sixth?" .

He nodded.

"But, damn it, Otto, all sorts of big guns will be starting in that."

He nodded again. "In the sports-car class against Braumüller."

I rolled up my sleeves. "To business then, Otto! Wholesale oil baths for the favourite."

"Half a mo'," said the last of the romantics, who had just come in. "Fodder first." He unpacked supper, cheese, bread, raucherwurst as hard as a brick, and sardines. With it we drank good cool beer. We ate like a gang of hungry threshers. Then we set about Karl. For two hours we worked on him,

testing and greasing everywhere. Afterwards Lenz and I sat down to a second meal. Gottfried turned on the Ford's light-as well. In the collision one of the headlamps had remained intact. From the twisted chasis it now stared up into the sky.

Lenz turned round satisfied. "So, now bring out the bottles. We must celebrate the Feast of the Flowering Tree."

I placed the cognac, the gin, and two glasses on the table.

"And what about yourself?" asked Gottfried.

"I'm not drinking."

"What? Why not?"

"Because I'm fed up with this damned boozing."

Lenz contemplated me awhile. "Our child has over-schnapped himself, Otto," said he at last to Köster.

"Then let him be, if he doesn't want to," replied Köster.

Lenz filled his own glass. "The lad has been a bit cracked for some time."

"There are worse things," said I.

The moon rose big and red over the roof of the factory opposite. We sat awhile in silence.

"Say, Gottfried," I began at last, "you consider yourself a bit of an expert in matters of love—"

"An expert? Man, I'm an old master," Lenz modestly replied.

"Fine. Then you'll be able to tell me: in love does one always behave like a damned fool?"

"How do you mean, like a damned fool?"

"Well, as if one were half-tight. Skite and blather and swindle."

Lenz burst out laughing. "My dear baby! The whole thing is a swindle. A wonderful swindle by Mama Nature. Look at the plum tree, for instance. Making herself more beautiful than she will be afterwards. It would be just terrible if love had any truck with truth. Thank God the damned moralists can't get everything under their thumbs."

I sat up. "You mean, without some swindle it just wouldn't go at all."

"Absolutely not, my child."

"A man' can make himself damned ridiculous though," said I.

Lenz grinned. "Mark this one thing, my boy: never, never, never can a man make himself ridiculous in the eyes of a woman by anything he may do on her account. Not even by the most childish performances. Do anything you

like—stand on your head, talk the most utter twaddle, swank like a peacock, sing under her window—anything at all but one thing: don't be matter-of-fact. Don't be sensible."

I began to brighten. "What do you think, Otto?"

Köster laughed. "He's probably right."

He got up, went over to Karl and put up the bonnet. I .fetched the rum bottle and a glass and put them on the table. Otto switched on the car. The engine purred, deep and strong. Lenz had his feet up on the window ledge and was staring out into the night.

I drew up beside him. "Were you ever drunk when you were with a woman?"

"Often," he replied without stirring.

"And?"

He looked at me sideways. "You mean, and then mixed things up a bit? Never apologise. Never talk. Send flowers. No letter. Only flowers. They cover up everything. Even graves."

I looked at him. He did not stir. His eyes glittered in the reflection of the white light outside. The engine was still running, softly growling, as if the earth beneath us were quaking.

"Well, I guess I might as well have a drop," said I and opened the bottle.

Köster switched off the engine. Then he turned to Lenz.

"The moon's bright enough now to be able to find a glass, Gottfried. What about turning off the illuminations? The Ford anyway. The damned thing with its cockeyed searchlight reminds me of the war. It was no joke at night when those things reached out after your aeroplane."

Lenz nodded. "And that there reminds me—well, no matter." He got up and turned off the headlights.

The moon had risen high over the factdry roof and was now hanging like a yellow Chinese lantern in the upper branches of the plum tree. The branches swayed gently back and forth in the light breeze.

"It's extraordinary," said Lenz after a while, "the way men put up monuments to every conceivable sort of person —why not occasionally to the moon or to a tree in blossom?"

I went home early. As I opened the hall door I heard music. It was the secretary's, Erna Bönig's, gramophone. A soft, clear woman's voice was

singing. Then came a quiver of muted violins and strumming guitars. And again the voice, piercing sweet as if it were overflowing with a great joy. I listened to catch the words. It sounded strangely moving here in the dark corridor between Frau Bender's sewing machine and the Hasse's family trunks, the way the woman there sang so softly.

I looked up at the stuffed boar's head over the kitchen door. I heard the housemaid rattling dishes. "How can I live without thee?" sang the voice a few steps away behind the door.

I shrugged my shoulders and went into my room. ' Next door I heard an excited argument. A few minutes later there was a knock and Hasse came in.

"Am I disturbing you?" he asked wearily.

"Not at all," said I. "Will you have something to drink?"

"I'd rather not. Just sit a bit."

He gazed dully in front of him.

"You're well off," said he. "You're alone—"

"Ach, nonsense," I replied. "Always to be sitting around like this alone, that's nothing either—you take it from me."

He sat sunken in his armchair. His eyes were glazed in the half-light that entered from the street lamp outside. The narrow, round shoulders . . .

"I pictured life so different," said he after a while.

"We all have," said I.

After half an hour he went back again to make peace with his wife. I gave him some cigarettes and a half-bottle of curacao that had been standing in the cupboard from some previous occasion—unpleasant, sweet stuff, hut quite all right for him. He didn't understand such things.

Softly, almost soundlessly, he went out, a shadow into the shadow, as if he were already extinguished. I closed the door after him again. As I did so a scrap of music floated in from the passage—violins, banjos.

I sat by the window. Outside lay the graveyard in the blue moonlight. The coloured rockets of the electric signs climbed up over the treetops and the gravestones gleamed out of the darkness. They were quiet and unterrifying. Cars hooted close by them and the light of the headlamps wiped across their weather-worn inscriptions.

I sat a long while and thought of all sorts of things. Among others, of how we came back from the war, like miners from a pit disaster, young and disillusioned of everything but ourselves. We had meant to wage war against the lies, the selfishness, the greed, the inertia of the heart that was the cause of

all that lay behind us; we had become hard, without trust in anything but in our comrades beside us and in things—the sky, trees, the earth, bread, tobacco, that never played false to any man—and what had come of it? All collapsed, perverted and forgotten. And to those who had not forgotten was left only power-lessness, despair, indifference and schnapps. The day of great dreams for the future of mankind was past. The busy-bodies, the self-seekers triumphed. Corruption . . . Misery . . .

You are well off, you are alone, Hasse had said. All very well—the man who is alone cannot be forsaken. But sometimes, at night, the whole artificial structure collapses, life turns into a sobbing insistent melody; out of the senseless grinding of the everlasting barrel organ, rises up a whirlwind of wild desires, cravings, melancholy, hope, without direction seeking an object. *Ach*, this pitiful need for a little bit of warmth—-couldn't it be two hands then and a face bowed near? Or was that too only deception, surrender, and flight? Was there nothing then, but to be alone?

I shut the window. No, there was nothing. For anything more, there was too little solid ground under one's feet.

But next morning I rose early and, before going to work, knocked up the proprietor of a little flowershop. I selected a bunch of roses and asked him to send them off at once. It felt a bit strange as I slowly wrote the address —*Patricia Hollmann*—on the card.

Chapter V

In his oldest clothes Köster had gone off to the income tax office. He meant to try to get our tax reduced. Lenz and I were alone in the workshop.

"Well, Gottfried," said I, "now for the old Cadillac!"

Our advertisement had appeared the night before. So to-day we might reckon on customers—if anybody came at all, that is. Anyway we must have the car ready.

First we went over the varnish with polishes. It took on a wonderful shine and already looked as if it had cost another hundred marks. Then we filled up the engine with the thickest oil there is. The pistons were no longer first rate, and knocked a bit. The thick oil made up for that and the engine ran wonderfully quietly. And in the gears and the differential we put plenty of grease to make them completely silent.

Then we drove her out. In the neighbourhood was a stretch of very bad road. We took her over it at fifty kilometres. The body rattled. We let a quarter of an atmosphere out of the tyres. That was an improvement. We let out another quarter. Now there wasn't a sound.

We drove back, oiled the squeaking bonnet, stuck a bit of rubber in between, put hot water in the radiator so that the engine would spring to it all right, and sprayed the car underneath once again with a petrol dust remover, so that it shone there as well. Then Gottfried lifted his hands to heaven. "Now come, blessed customer! Dearest possessor of a pocketbook, come! As the bridegroom awaiteth the coming of the bride, so we wait for thee!"

The bride kept us waiting. So we shoved the baker's puffing billy over the pit and began to take down the front axle. We worked steadily for some hours without speaking. Then I heard Jupp at the petrol pump start to whistle, "See what is coming here . . ."

I clambered out of the pit and looked through the window. A little, undersized man was walking around the Cadillac. He looked solid and respectable.

"Look here, Gottfried," I whispered, "do you think that's a bride?"

"Sure," said Lenz after the first glance. "Look at the expression.

Suspicious already, before anybody is there. Get busy. I'll stay here in reserve —and come afterwards, if you can't manage it. Remember the tricks."

"Right." I went out.

The man looked at me out of cool, black eyes.

I introduced myself: "Lohkamp."

"Blumenthal."

That was Gottfried's first trick—introduce yourself. He said it created at once a more intimate atmosphere. His second trick was to hold back to start with and let the customer talk, and then hoe in later when the moment had come.

"You have come about the Cadillac, Herr Blumenthal?" I asked.

Blumenthal nodded.

"There she is, over there," said I, and pointed.

"I see that," replied Blumenthal.

I gave him a quick glance. Look out, thought I, a wily customer.

We walked across the yard. I opened the door of the car and started the engine. Then I kept quiet to give Blumenthal time to make his observations. He would be sure to find something to criticize; then I would start in.

But Blumenthal did not examine; he did not criticize either. Like me, he said nothing also and just stood there like a blockhead. There was nothing for it, I should have to take out my knife and fork.

I began to describe the Cadillac, slowly and systematically, as a mother her child, trying at the same time to worm out of the fellow whether he knew anything at all. If he were an expert then I must go more for the engine and the chassis; if he knew nothing, then for comfort and the knicknacks.

But as yet he betrayed nothing. He let me talk until I felt like a balloon.

"What would you want the car for? For the city or for travelling?" I asked at last, in the hope of contact that way. perhaps.

"For everything," explained Blumenthal.

"Aha. And would you drive it yourself or with a chauffeur?"

"Depends."

Depends. The man was no better than a parrot. He belonged to an order of Trappists, evidently.

To liven him up I tried to get him to try something. Usually that made customers more amenable. I was afraid he would go to sleep on me otherwise.

"The hood for such a large body is remarkably light," said I. "You just try to close it. You can do it with one hand."

But Blumenthal thought it was unnecessary. He could see it.

I flung the doors shut with a bang and rattled the handles. "Nothing worn. As tight as the taxes. Try them."

Blumenthal did not try. It was self-evident. A damned hard nut.

I led him to the windows. "Light as a feather to turn. Stay put, at any height."

He did not stir.

"And unbreakable glass," I went on, almost desperate. "An inestimable advantage. In the workshops there stands a Ford . . ." I told him the story of the baker's wife, improving on it a bit in that I smashed up a child as well.

But Blumenthal had an inner life like a burglar-proof safe.

"All cars have unbreakable glass," he interrupted. "That is nothing out of the way."

"With no car is unbreakable glass the general thing," I replied with mild sharpness. "At most, in a few types, the windscreen. But in no case the big side windows."

I sounded the horn and turned to a description of the inside comforts—the luggage carrier, the seats, the pockets, the switchboard; I went into every little detail; I even passed Blumenthal the cigarette-lighter, taking advantage of the opportunity to offer him a cigarette, to get at him that way perhaps—but he declined.

"I don't smoke them, thanks," said he, and looked at me in such a bored way that a dreadful thought suddenly occurred to me—perhaps he did not want us at all, perhaps he had merely lost his way and wanted to buy something quite different—a machine for sewing buttonholes or a radio—and was just standing around here awhile, undecided, before going on.

"Let us make a trial run, Herr Blumenthal," I suggested at last, already well beaten.

"Trial run?" said he, as if I had said "railway station."

"Yes, trial run. You ought to see, of course, how the car runs. She lies on the road like a board. Might be on rails. And the engine pulls as if the heavy body were no more than a feather—"

"Ach, trial runs—" He made a belittling gesture. "Trial runs prove nothing. You find out only afterwards what's the matter with the car."

Of course, you cast-iron limb of Satan, thought I wrath-fully; or do you think I'm going to make you a present of it?

"Very well, then not," said I abandoning all hope. The fellow did not

want it, that was clear.

But then he turned round suddenly, looked me full in the eyes, and asked softly and sharply and very quickly: "What's the car cost?"

"Seven thousand marks," I replied like a shot without flickering an eyelash. This chap must not see that I have to consider even for a moment. I knew that. One second's hesitation would have cost a thousand marks off the price. "Seven thousand marks net," I replied firmly, thinking, "and if you offer five you'll get away with it."

But Blumenthal offered nothing. He just gave me one short snort: "Much too dear!"

"Of course!" said I, and resigned the case.

"Why of course'?" asked Blumenthal, suddenly almost human.

"Herr Blumenthal," I replied, "where did you ever meet the man who ever answered anything else to a price?"

A suspicion of a smile stole over his face. "True. But the car is really too dear."

I could not believe my ears. There it was at last, the right note. The tone of the interested. Or was this only another damned twist?

At that moment a smartly dressed young fellow walked in the gate of the yard. He drew a newspaper from his pocket, compared the number of the house once more, and strode up to me. "Is there a Cadillac for sale here?"

I nodded and gazed speechless at the yellow bamboo cane and the pigskin gloves.

"Can I see it then?" he went on without turning a hair.

"This is it here," said I; "but perhaps you would not mind waiting a moment, I still have something to do. Won't you sit down inside awhile?"

The young swell listened a moment to the humming of the engine, made at first a critical, then an appreciative face, and let me conduct him to the office.

"Idiot," I growled at him and hastened back to Blumenthal.

"If you had once driven the car, you would think differently about the price," said I. "You can gladly have it to try for as long as you like. Or I could call some evening and take you for a trial run perhaps, if that suits you better."

But the momentary excitement had already flown. Blumenthal was again standing there like a glee-club president in granite.

"Never mind," said he, "I must go now. If I should want to have a trial run, I can always telephone."

I saw there was nothing more to be done for the present. This fellow was not to be talked into anything.

"Very well," I declared, "but won't you give me your phone number, so that I can let you know if somebody else seems to be interested?"

Blumenthal looked at me significantly. "Interested is still a long way from sold."

He took out a cigar case and offered me one: He was smoking already—Corona-Coronas, by Jove! He must have money like hay. But that was nothing to me now. I took the cigar.

He gave me a friendly handshake and left. I watched him go, and cursed him softly but thoroughly. Then I went back into the workshop.

"Well?" I was greeted by the young toff, Gottfried Lenz. "How did I do? Saw you writhing about there, and thought I'd lend a hand. Lucky thing Otto changed here for the Income Tax. Saw. his good suit hanging there, leapt into it, out the window and back in again—a serious buyer. Pretty good, eh?"

"Damned silly," I replied. "The fellow is slier than both of us put together. See this cigar? One mark fifty apiece. You've chased away a millionaire."

Gottfried took the cigar out of my hand, smelled it and lit it. "I've saved you from a swindler. Millionaires don't smoke cigars like this. They smoke ones at twenty-four a shilling."

"Rot," I answered. "Swindlers don't call themselves Blumenthal. They, call themselves Count Blumenau or some such."

"He'll come back again," said Lenz, optimistic as ever, and blowing smoke from my own cigar into my face.

"Not he," said I with conviction. "But how did you come by the bamboo waddy and the gloves?"

"A loan. Over the way, from Benn and Co. I know the salesgirl there. I think I might even keep the stick. I like it."

Pleased with himself, he twirled the thick cane in the air.

"Gottfried," said I, "you're wasted here. D'you know what—you should go into vaudeville. That's where you belong."

'"They've been ringing up for you," said Frida, Frau Zalewski's squint-eyed housemaid, as I came in unexpectedly at lunchtime.

I swung round. "When?"

"About half an hour ago. A lady."

"What did she say, then?"

"She'd call up again in the evening. But I told her it wouldn't be much use, you were never home in the evening."

I stared at her. "What? You told her that? *Herrgott*, it's high time someone taught you how to use a telephone."

"I know how to use a telephone," announced Frida loftily. "And you are as good as never at home of an evening."

"That's none of your affair," I cursed. "Next time you'll be telling her I have holes in my socks."

"I could if you like," retorted Frida, looking at me malevolently with her red inflamed eyes. We were old enemies.

I should have liked to stick her into her soup pot, but controlled myself, felt in my pocket, pressed a mark into her hand and asked in a conciliatory tone? "Did the lady not say her name?"

"No," said Frida.

"What kind of voice had she then? Rather deep and as if she were a bit hoarse?"

"I don't know," declared Frida phlegmatically, as if I had never pressed a mark into her hand.

"A pretty ring you have there on your finger,", said I. "Quite charming; now just think if you can't remember."

"No," replied Frida and malicious triumph shone in her face.

"Then go hang yourself," said I and left her.

Sharp on six I was home again. As I opened the door I was met by an unusual picture. In the passage, surrounded by all the women of the boardiing house, stood Frau Bender. "Just come here," said Frau Zalewski.

The cause of the gathering was a ribbon-bedecked baby about six months old. Frau Bender had brought it in a pram from the orphanage. It was a perfectly normal child, but the ladies were bending over it with expressions of ridiculous enchantment, as if it were the first baby the world had produced. They uttered clucking noises, clipped their fingers before the eyes of the little creature, and pursed their lips. Even Erna Bönig, in her dragon kimono, joined in this orgy of platonic maternity.

"Isn't he a charming little thing?" asked Frau Zalewski with swimming

eyes.

"One will be able to tell that better in twenty or thirty years' time," said I with a sidelong glance toward the telephone. Let's hope a call wouldn't come just now while they were all assembled here.

"But take a good look at it," Frau Hasse insisted.

I looked. It was a baby like any other. I could discover nothing remarkable about it. At most it had terribly small hands, and it was extraordinary to think one had been just so tiny oneself once.

"Poor worm," said I, "little does he guess what is ahead of him. What sort of war has he arrived just in time for, I wonder."

"Don't be horrid," replied Frau Zalewski. "Have you no feeling?"

"Much too much," I explained, "or I wouldn't hit on such ideas." And so withdrew to my room.

Ten minutes later the telephone bell rang. I heard my name and went out. Sure enough the whole gang was still there! They did not lower their voices even when I had the receiver to my ear and detected the voice of Patricia Hollmann, thanking me for the flowers. On the contrary, the baby, who was apparently the most sensible of them all and had had enough of the monkey business, suddenly started to howl.

"Pardon me," said I desperately into the telephone. "I can't catch what you say, there is a baby here having a fit; it's not mine though."

The ladies were hissing like a nest of cobra's to quiet the shrieking creature. They succeeded promptly in setting it off even louder. Now I did begin to perceive that it really was a remarkable child; its lungs must reach down to its knees, otherwise this shattering voice was not to be explained. I was in a difficult situation; while with my eyes I. was shooting angry glances at the mother complex before me, with my lips I was endeavouring to speak friendly words into the mouthpiece; from the crown of my head to the tip of my nose I was a thunderstorm incarnate, from the nose to the chin a sunny spring landscape; it is a mystery to me that in spite of everything I did contrive to fix an appointment for the next evening.

"You ought to install a soundproof telephone box," said I to Frau Zalewski.

But she was ready for me. "Why so?" she flashed back. "Have you so much to conceal?"

I said no more and made off. It is no use quarrelling with excited maternal instincts. They have the moral support of the entire world behind

them.

We were to forgather that evening at Gottfried's. I had supper at a small pub and then went along. En route, by way of celebration, I bought myself a magnificent new tie at a smart outfitter's. I could not get over my susprise about how smoothly it had all gone, and I warned myself that to-morrow I must be as serious as the managing director of a burial club.

Gottfried's digs were a sight worth seeing. They were hung with souvenirs that he had brought back from South America. Gay raffia mats on the walls, several masks, a dried human head, grotesque pots, spears and, as *pièce de résistance*, an enormous collection of photographs that occupied one entire wall: Indian girls and Creoles—lovely, brown, lithe creatures of incredible grace and nonchalance.

Besides Lenz and Köster there were Braumüller and Grau. Oscar Braumüller, with sunburnt, copper head, was squatting on the arm of the sofa enthusiastically examining Gottfried's photographs. He was racer for a firm of car manufacturers, and had long been friends with Köster. He was driving in the race on the sixth, for which Otto had entered Karl. Massive, bloated and already fairly drunk, Ferdinand Grau was sitting at the table. As he caught sight of me he reached out his great paw.

"Bob," said he in a thick voice, "what do you want here among the damned? There is nothing here for you. Go away. Save yourself. While there is time."

I glanced across at Lenz. He winked at me. "Ferdinand is in high form. For two days now he has been drinking to the beloved dead. He has sold a portrait and got the money."

Ferdinand was a painter. And he would have starved long since, had he not had a specialty. He painted after photographs marvellously lifelike portraits of deceased persons, for pious relatives. He lived by it—quite well, in fact. His landscapes, which were excellent, nobody bought. This gave to his conversation a somewhat pessimistic tone.

"A licensed victualler this time, Bob," said he; "a pub keeper with a rich deceased aunt in vinegar and oil." He shuddered. "Horrible."

"Look here, Ferdinand," protested Lenz, "you oughtn't to use those harsh expressions. You live off one of the most beautiful of human traits, off piety."

"Nonsense," declared Ferdinand, "I live off the sense of guilt. What's

piety but the sense of guilt? People want to square off all the things they have wished and done to the beloved dead while they were alive." He passed his hand slowly over his burning brow. "Just think how often my licensed victualler has wished his aunt in her grave! To make up, he now has her painted in the finest colours and hung above his sofa. He likes her better that way. Piety I Mankind remembers its few meagre good qualities only when it is too late. And then he comforts himself by thinking how very nasty he could have been, and counts it for righteousness. Virtue, kindliness, generosity—he desires that in others so that he can impose on them."

Lenz grinned. "You are attacking the pillars of human society, Ferdinand."

"The pillars of human society are covetousness, fear, and corruption," retorted Grau. "Man is evil, but loves the good—when others do it." He held out his glass to Lenz.

"So, and now pour me one and don't talk the whole evening. Let someone else get a word in."

I climbed over the sofa to where Köster was standing. An idea had suddenly occurred to me. "Otto, I want you to do me a favour. I want the Cadillac for to-morrow evening."

Braumüller interrupted his intensive study of a scantily clad Creole dancer.

"Can you take corners now, then?" he enquired. "I thought you could only drive straight ahead as yet, when someone else steered for you."

"Don't you worry, Oscar," I replied, "we're going to make mincemeat of you in the race on the sixth."

Braumüller almost choked with laughing.

"Well, what about it, Otto?" I asked eagerly.

"The car isn't insured, Bob," said Köster.

"I'll crawl like a snake and hoot like a bus. Only a few kilometres into the country."

Otto closed his eyes until they were narrow slits and smiled. "It's all right by me, Bob."

"You want the car, I suppose, to go with your new tie?" asked Lenz, who had come over. '"You shut up," said I, pushing him aside.

But he was not to be eluded.

"Show us, baby!" He felt the silk between his fingers. "Fine. Our boy as a gigolo. Strikes me he's going to a bride show."

"You haven't anything on me to-day, you quick-change artist," I replied.

"Bride show?" Ferdinand Grau lifted his head. "And why shouldn't he go to a bride show?" He became livelier and turned to me. "You do, Bob. You have the requirements for it. A certain simplicity is necessary for love. You have it. Keep it. It is a gift of God. Never to be gotten again once it is lost."

"Don't take it to heart too much, though, baby," said Lenz with a grin. "It's no shame to be born stupid. Only to die stupid."

"Now you be quiet, Gottfried." With one movement of his powerful paw Grau wiped him aside. "You don't come into it, you back-area romanticist. It's no pity about you."

"You just say your say, Ferdinand," said Lenz. "Expression always eases the soul."

"You, you are a malingerer," declared Grau. "A miserable escapist, that's what you are."

"So are we all," grinned Lenz. "We live only on, illusions and credits."

"Yes, indeed," said Grau surveying us from under his bushy eyebrows. "On illusions out of the past, and credits on the future." Then he turned to me again. " 'Simplicity,' I said, Bob. Only envious people call it stupidity. Don't you worry on that score. It's not a weakness; it's a gift."

Lenz wanted to interrupt. But Ferdinand went on. "You know what I mean. A simple courage, not yet eaten away by skepticism and over-intelligence. Parsifal was stupid. If he had been bright, he would never have conquered the Holy Grail. Only the stupid conquer in life; the other man foresees too many obstacles and becomes uncertain before he starts. In difficult times simplicity is the most priceless gift—a magic cloak that conceals dangers into which the super-intelligent run headlong as if hypnotized."

He drank a great gulp and looked at me with his immense, blue eyes, that sat in his lined face like a piece of the sky. "Never want to know too much, Bob. The less a man knows the simpler it is to live. Knowledge maketh free—but unhappy. Come, drink with me to simplicity, to stupidity and to the things that belong to it—to love, to faith in the future, to the dream of happiness; to magnificent stupidity, to the paradise lost. . . ."

He sat there, heavy and massive, suddenly sunk back into himself and his drunkenness, like a lonely hill of unassailable melancholy. His life had gone to pieces, and he knew that he would never assemble it again. He lived in his big studio and had a relationship with his housekeeper. The woman was

tough and coarse; Grau, on the other hand, despite his great body, was sensitive and unstable. He could not get away from her and he probably did not care. He was forty-two years of age.

Though I knew he was only drunk, I felt a slight shudder to see him so. He did not come often; he generally drank alone in his studio. That soon gets one down.

A smile passed over his face. He pressed a glass into my hand.

"Drink, Bob. And save yourself. Think on what I've said to you."

"Right, Ferdinand."

Lenz opened the gramophone. He had a pile of Negro records and played several—about the Mississippi, cotton picking, and sultry nights on the blue, tropical rivers.

Chapter VI

Patricia Hollmann lived in a big, yellow block of flats removed from the street by a narrow verge of grass. In front of the entrance was a lamp. I parked the Cadillac directly under it. In the flickering light she looked like an immense elephant of molten, black lacquer.

I had still further perfected my wardrobe. To the tie I had added a new hat and a pair of gloves. I was also wearing Lenz's ulster, a marvellous brown affair of finest Shetland wool. Thus armed, I hoped to dispel forever any first unfortunate impression of drunkenness.

I blew the horn. Immediately, like a rocket ascending, lights flashed on at five windows, one above the other. The lift started humming. I watched it descend like a bright skep lowered out of the sky. The girl opened the door and came quickly down the steps. She had on a short fur jacket and a close-fitting brown skirt.

"Hello!" She offered her hand. "I am so glad to get out. I have been at home all day."

I liked the way she shook hands—with a grip more powerful than one would expect. I hate people who offer a limp hand like a dead fish.

"Why didn't you tell me sooner?" I replied. "I might have called for you at midday."

"Have you so much time, then?" she asked laughing.

"Not exactly. But I might have arranged to get off."

She took a deep breath. "Wonderful air—it smells of spring."

"You can have all the air you want," said I. "What about going out into the country, by way of the forest? You see I have a car." Casually I indicated the Cadillac, as if it were an old Ford.

"The Cadillac?" Surprised, she looked at me. "Is it yours?"

"For this evening, yes. Other times it belongs to our workshop. We've been working on it and mean to make the deal of our lives with it."

I opened the door. "What do you say if we drive to the 'Bunch of Grapes' first and have something to eat?"

"Eat certainly, but why the 'Bunch of Grapes'?"

I looked at her puzzled. The "Bunch of Grapes" was the only decent restaurant I knew.

"It's open," said I. "That's all I know about it. And I think we have a duty toward the Cadillac."

"Duties are irksome," she replied. "The 'Bunch of Grapes' is sure to be steep and boring. Let's go somewhere else."

I stood at a loss. My ideas for a serious evening were vanishing into thin air. "Then you must suggest something," said I. "The other places I know are a bit slapdash. I don't think they would suit you."

"How do you know?"

"Can see that—"

She looked at me quickly: "Well, we could try."

"All right." I definitely gave up my entire programme. "Then I do know somewhere, if you're not easily shocked. We'll go to Alfons'."

"Alfons' sounds very good," she replied; "and I'm not easily shocked this evening."

"Alfons runs a beer garden," said I; "an old friend of Lenz's."

She laughed. "Lenz has friends everywhere, I guess."

I nodded. "He makes them easily. You saw that with Binding."

"Yes, indeed," she replied. "It was like lightning."

We drove off.

Alfons was a heavy placid fellow. Prominent cheekbones . . . Small eyes . . . Shirt sleeves rolled up . . . Arms like a gorilla. . . . Anyone he didn't want in his pub he threw out himself—including members of the Fatherland Sports Union. For really difficult guests he kept a hammer under the counter. The place was conveniently situated; close by the hospital. It saved Alfons transport charges.

With a hairy hand he wiped over the bright deal table.

"Beer?" he asked.

"Whisky, and something to eat," said I.

"And the lady?" asked Alfons.

"The lady will also have a whisky," said Patricia Holl-mann.

"That's the stuff!" remarked Alfons. "There are pork chops with sauerkraut."

"Killed by yourself?" I asked.

"Certainly."

"But the lady would probably prefer something a bit lighter, Alfons."

"Not seriously," protested Alfons. "Let her have a look at the chops first."

He got a waiter to show a portion. "Was a wonderful sow," said he. "Took two firsts."

"That's the stuff," replied Patricia Hollmann to my amazement, with as much assurance as if she had been in the racket for years.

Alfons winked. "Two portions then?"

She nodded.

"Fine! I'll go and choose them myself."

He went off to the kitchen.

"I take back my doubts about the place," said I. "You have taken Alfons by storm. Choosing them himself—usually he does that only for very old customers."

Alfons returned. "I've thrown in a fresh sausage as well."

"Not a bad thought," said I.

Alfons looked at us benevolently. The whisky arrived. Three glasses. One for Alfons.

"Well, *pros't!*" said he. "May our children have rich parents."

We touched glasses. The girl did not sip, she tipped it down.

"That's the stuff," said Alfons and sloped back to the counter.

"Did you like the taste of the whisky?" I asked.

She shook herself. "A bit powerful. But I couldn't let Alfons down."

The pork chops were the goods. I ate two large portions and Patricia Hollmann cheered me on. I thought it grand the way she joined in and found her feet in the place without any trouble. And without any fuss she drank yet a second whisky with Alfons. He winked to me secretly that he thought she was all right. And Alfons was a connoisseur. Not exactly as regards beauty and culture; more for kernel and content.

"When you are married," said I, "you might teach Alfons to recognize one or two of his human weaknesses."

"Certainly," she replied. "He looks as if he had none."

"But he has." I pointed to a table beside the bar. "There."

"What? the gramophone?"

"Not the gramophone. Choral singing. Alfons has a weakness for choral singing. No dances, no classical music—only choirs. Male choirs, mixed choirs—everything on those records there is a choir. There—you see, here he comes."

"Like it?" asked Alfons.

"Like mother makes," I replied.

"The lady too?"

"The best pork chops in my life," declared the lady boldly.

Alfons nodded satisfaction. "Now I'll play you my new record. Make you open your eyes."

He went to the gramophone. The needle scratched and a male choir lifted up its voice, singing with immense gusto "Silence in the Forest." It was a damned noisy silence.

From the first onset the whole place was still. Alfons could be dangerous if anyone showed irreverence. He stood at the counter, his hairy arms propping his chin. His expression changed under the influence of the music. He looked almost dreamy—dreamy as a gorilla can. Choral singing had an extraordinary effect on him; it made him as soft and sentimental as a calf. When he was younger and even more quick-tempered his wife used to keep one of his favourite records always ready on the instrument, so that if he should get dangerous and appear with the hammer she could switch on the needle; then he would lower the hammer, and listen and calm. It was unnecessary now: his wife was dead and her portrait, by Ferdinand Grau, for which Ferdinand always had free table here, hung over the bar—and besides, Alfons was older and colder.

The record ran out. Alfons came over.

"Wonderful," said I.

"Especially the first tenor," added Patricia Hollmann..

"Exactly," observed Alfons showing signs of recovery. "You know something about it I see. The first tenor is in a class by himself."

We were standing out on the pavement. The street lamps outside the pub cast restless lights and shadows up into the labyrinth of branches of an old tree. The twigs already had a shimmer of green and in tbe flickering uncertain light from below the tree appeared even bigger and taller, as if its top were lost in the gloom up there—like some enormous, outstretched hand, in an immensity' of desire grasping the sky.

Patricia Hollmann gave a slight shiver.

"Are you cold?" I asked.

She turned up her collar and tucked her hands into the sleeves of her fur

jacket. "It's only momentary. It was pretty warm in there."

"You are too lightly clad," said I. "It is still cold at night."

She shook her head. "I don't like wearing heavy things. It will be nice when it gets really warm again. I can't bear cold. At any rate not in the town."

"It is warmer in the Cadillac," said I. "I took the precaution of bringing a rug."

I helped her into the car and spread the rug over her knees. She drew them high up. "Grand! Now I'm quite warm. Cold makes you miserable."

"Not only cold." I turned to the wheel. "Now shall we go for a jaunt?"

She nodded. "I'd like it."

"Where to?"

"Just slowly along the road. It doesn't matter where."

"Right."

I started the engine and we drove slowly and planless through the city. It was the hour when the evening traffic was at its thickest. We slipped almost inaudibly through, the engine ran so sweetly. The car might have been a ship gliding soundlessly along the gay canals of life. The streets drifted by—bright doorways, lights, rows of street lamps, the sweet mild evening effervescence of life, the gentle fever of the lighted night, and, over all, between the roofs of the houses, the great, iron-grey sky, against which the city flung its light.

The girl sat silent beside me; brightness and shadow through the window glided across her face. I glanced at her occasionally; she reminded me again of the evening when I had first seen her. Her expression had become graver, she appeared stranger than before, but very beautiful; it was the same expression that had moved me then and had not let me go. It seemed to me as if there were in it something of the secret of quietness that things have that are near to nature—trees, clouds, animals—and occasionally a woman.

We had reached the quieter streets of the suburbs. The wind grew stronger. It seemed to be driving the night before it. At a large square, about which little houses were sleeping in little gardens, I stopped the car.

Patricia Hollmann made a movement as if she were awakening.

"It's lovely, that," said she after a while. "If I had a car, I would drive about slowly like that every evening. There is something unreal in gliding along so noiselessly. One is awake and dreaming at the same time. I can imagine that one would not want, then, any human being of an evening—"

I took a packet of cigarettes from my pocket. "One needs something of an evening, eh?"

She nodded. "Of an evening, yes. It is a queer thing, when it turns dark."

I tore open the packet. "They are American cigarettes, do you like them?"

"Yes, better than any."

I gave her a light. For an instant the warm, close light of the match illumined her face and my hands, and suddenly I had a mad feeling as if we had belonged to one another a long time.

I lowered the window to let out the smoke.

"Would you like to drive a bit now?" I asked. "I'm sure you'd find it fun."

She turned toward me. "I'd like to; but I can't."

"You really can't?"

"No. I've never learnt."

I saw my chance. "But Binding might have shown you long ago," said I.

She laughed. "Binding is too much in love with his car. He won't let anybody near it."

"That is just stupid," I continued, glad to be able to give Fatty one. "I'll let you drive, certainly. Come on."

I threw all Köster's warnings to the wind and got out to let her take the wheel. She got excited. "But I tell you I really and truly can't drive."

"Sure, you can," I replied. "Only you don't know it yet."

I showed her how to change gear and work the clutch. "So," said I then, "now away you go."

"One moment!" She pointed to a solitary bus crawling along the road. "Shouldn't we let that by first?"

"Certainly not." I swiftly slipped the gear and let in the clutch.

"Heavens!" cried Patricia Hollmann. "It's going."

"That's what it was built for. Only no fear. Give it plenty of gas. I'll watch it."

She was gripping the steering wheel desperately tight and looking apprehensively along the road. "My God, we are going pretty fast, aren't we?"

I glanced at the speedometer. "You are doing now, just twenty-five kilometres. That is in reality twenty. A good speed for a long-distance runner."

"It feels like eighty to me."

After a few minutes the first fear was overcome. We were driving along

a wide, straight road. The Cadillac reeled a bit now and then as if we had cognac instead of petrol in the tank, and occasionally ran suspiciously near the curb, but gradually it went quite well, and with the result I had anticipated —I got the upper hand, for we now suddenly had the relationship of pupil and teacher, and I made the best of it.

"Mind," said I, "there's a policeman over there."

"Should I stop?"

"It's too late now."

"And what happens if he catches me? I haven't a driver's license."

"Then we both go to gaol."

"Good heavens!" Alarmed, she felt for the brake with her foot.

"Gas!" I called. "Gas! Step on it hard. We must go proudly and swiftly by. Boldness is the best rule against the law."

The policeman took no notice of us at all. The girl sighed with relief.

"I never knew before that traffic police could look like fire-spitting dragons," said she when we had put him a few hundred yards behind us.

"They only do that when you drive around them." I slowly put on the brake. "So, now here's a fine empty byroad. We are going to practise now, properly. First of all, starting and stopping."

Patricia Hollmann stalled the engine several times. She unbuttoned her fur coat. "It is making me hot! But I must learn it."

She sat eager and attentive, watching first what I did. Then with excited little cries she took her first corners and was as afraid of approaching headlights as if they had been the devil, and as proud when she had successfully passed them. Soon there arose in the little space dimly lighted by the lamp in the switchboard a feeling of comradeship, which springs up quickly where technical, matter-of-fact things are concerned; and after half an hour, when we changed places and I drove back, we were as familiar with one another as if we had unbosomed our whole life histories.

In the neighbourhood of Nikolaistrasse I stopped the car again. We were directly under a red movie advertisement. The asphalt gleamed a pale purple. On the curb shone a big black spot.

"So," said I. "Now.we have honestly earned a glass of something to drink. Where should we do that?"

Patricia Hollmann considered a moment. "Let us go again to that lovely

bar with the sailing ship," she suggested.

For one moment I was in utmost alarm. In the bar was now sitting, for a dead cert., the last of the romantics. I saw his face already . . .

"Ach," said I swiftly, "that's nothing to write home about. There are lots of better places."

"I don't know—I thought it very nice recently."

"Really?" I asked taken aback. "You thought it very, nice recently?"

"Yes," she replied with a laugh. "Very."

Indeed, thought I, and that's what I've been blaming myself for!

"But I think around this time it is very full," I tried once more.

"We could see anyway," she replied.

"Yes, we could do that." I considered what I should do.

As we approached I got out quickly. "I'll just take a quick look. I'll be back in a minute."

There was nobody there I knew except Valentin. "I say, has Gottfried been here yet?" I asked.

Valentin nodded. "With Otto. They left half an hour ago."

"Pity," said I breathing again. "I should like to have seen them."

I went back to the car. "We might risk it," I explained. "It's not so bad to-day." As a precaution I parked the Cadillac round the next corner in the deepest shadow.

But we had not been sitting ten minutes when Lenz's straw-blond head appeared at the counter. Damn, thought I, now for it. A few weeks later would have suited me better.

Gottfried seemed not to want to remain. Already I fancied myself delivered when I saw Valentin drawing his attention to me. So much for my lying.

Gottfried's expression when he caught sight of us would have been a study for an ambitious film star. His eyes stood in his "head like two poached eggs and I was afraid his bottom jaw would drop off. It was a pity there wasn't a producer sitting in "The Bar" at that moment; I'm sure he would have engaged Lenz on the spot—for roles, for example, where the sea serpent suddenly appears with a bellow in front of the shipwrecked sailor.

Gottfried soon had himself in hand again. I cast an imploring look at him to vanish. He responded with a villainous grin, settled his coat and came forward.

I knew what was ahead and attacked immediately.

"Have you seen Fräulein Bomblatt home already?" I asked to neutralize him at once.

"Yes," he replied without betraying, by so much as an eyelid, that he had never heard of Fräulein Bomblatt till that second. "She sent you her love and hopes you will call her up first thing in the morning."

That was quite a good comeback. I nodded. "I'll do so. I hope she will buy the car."

Lenz opened his mouth once more. I kicked him on the shin and gave him such a look that he stopped short with a smirk.

We drank a few glasses. I only sidecars, with plenty of lemon. I did not mean to get myself in wrong again.

Gottfried was in form. "I've just been round to your place," said he. "Wanted to fetch you. Afterwards I went to the amusement park. They've got a magnificent new merry-go-round. What about coming?" He looked at Patricia Hollmann.

"At once," she replied, delighted. "Then let us start now," said I.

I was glad to get outside. In the open the business was simpler.

First the barrel-organs—advance posts of the amusement park. Melancholy sweet droning. On the threadbare velvet covers of the organs occasionally a parrot, or a half-frozen little monkey in a red twill jacket. . . . Then the harsh voices of vendors of crockery ware, glass-cutters, Turkish delight, balloons, suitings. . . . The cold blue light and the smell of the carbide lamps. . . . The fortunetellers, the astrologers, the pepper-cake tents, the swing boats, the sideshows—and lastly, clamourous with music, gay, glittering, lit-up like palaces, the circling turrets of the merry-go-rounds. . . .

"All aboard, lads," yelled Lenz as with streaming hair he made a wild leap for the scenic railway. It had the loudest orchestra. At every round six trumpeters stepped out of six gilded niches, turned to the east and the west, blew a blast, flourished their instruments and retired. It was glorious.

We were sitting in a large swan and lurching up and down. The world glittered and glided, it reeled and fell back into a black tunnel through which we hurtled to a beating of drums, immediately to be greeted again with trumpets and splendour.

"Onward!" Gottfried steered the way to a flying roundabout with airships and aeroplanes. We entered a zeppelin and did three rounds in it.

Rather out of breath, we got down again. "And now for the devil's wheel," announced Lenz.

The devil's wheel Was a large, flat disc, slightly raised in the middle, which revolved ever faster and faster and on which one had to keep upright. Gottfried boarded' it with about twenty others. He stepped it like a maniac and received special applause. At the finish he was alone with a cook who had a stern like a Clydesdale. That wily person planted herself, as the business became more difficult, plumb in the centre of the disc, while Gottfried swept prancing around her. The rest were already all under. At last fate claimed the last of the romantics also; he staggered into the arms of the cook, and in close embrace rolled over the edge. When he joined us again he had the cook on his arm.. He dubbed her, without more ado, Lina. Lina smiled embarrassment. He asked her what she would drink with him. Lina replied that beer was said to be good for thirst. The two disappeared into the Bavarian beer garden.

"And we? Where do we go now?" asked Patricia Hollmann with shining eyes.

"Into the maze of ghosts," said I, pointing to a large booth.

The maze was a way beset with surprises. After a few steps the ground wobbled, hands groped for one out of the dark, masked figures sprang out of corners, spirits howled —we laughed, but once the girl started swiftly back at the appearance of a green-lighted death's-head. For an instant she lay in my arms, her breath touched my cheek, I felt her hair on my lips—then immediately she was laughing again and I let her go.

I let her go—but something in me did not let her go. Long after we had come out I still felt her shoulder in my arm, the soft hair, the faint peach smell of her skin.

I avoided looking at her. She had suddenly become something different for me.

Lenz was already awaiting us. He was alone.

"Where's Lina?" I asked.

"Getting tight," he replied, with his head indicating the beer garden, "with a blacksmith."

"My sympathy," said I.

"Not at all," replied Gottfried. "Now let us pass on to serious man's work."

We went to a booth where one had to throw hard rubber rings on to hooks and could win all manner of things.

"So," said Lenz to Patricia Hollmann, shoving his hat on to the back of his head, "now we'll collect your trousseau."

He threw first and won an alarm clock. I followed and bagged a teddy bear. The booth proprietor passed them over and made a great spiel to attract other customers. "You'll soon change your tune," smirked Gottfried, and won a frying pan; I, a second teddy bear. "Bit of a cow, eh?" said the booth proprietor, handing us the things.

The chap did not know what he was in for. Lenz had been the best bomb thrower in the company; and in winter when there wasn't much doing we practised for months on end, throwing our hats on to all possible hooks. By comparison the rings here were child's play. Without any difficulty Gottfried next collected a cut-glass vase, I half a dozen gramophone records. The proprietor shoved them over to us in silence and then examined his hooks.

Lenz aimed, threw and won a coffeepot, the second prize. We now had a host of spectators. I threw three rings in rapid succession on to the same hook. Forfeit: the penitent Saint Magdalene in a gold frame.

The proprietor made a face as if he were at the dentist's, and refused to let us go on. We intended to stop, but the spectators kicked up a row. They insisted that the fellow should let us carry on. They wanted to see him cleaned out. When the rumpus was at its height Lina suddenly turned up with her blacksmith. "People should only miss, eh?" she crowed, "never hit, eh?" The blacksmith boomed support.

"All right," suggested Lenz, "one more throw each."

I threw first. A washbasin with jug and soap dish. Then came Lenz. He took five rings. He threw four in quick succession on to the same hook. Before the fifth he made an artistic pause and took out a cigarette. Three people offered him a light. The blacksmith slapped him on the shoulder. Lina was chewing her handkerchief with excitement. Then Gottfried took aim and threw the last ring, very gently so that it should not bounce off, clean on to the other four. It hung there. Thunderous applause. We had captured the first prize-—a pram with a pink cover and lace pillows.

The proprietor, cursing, wheeled it out. We packed the rest into it and moved off to the next stand. Lina pushed the pram. The blacksmith made such jokes about it that I thought better to drop behind a bit with Patricia Hollmann.

At the next stall one had to throw rings over wine bottles. If the ring landed clean one won the bottle. We got away with six bottles. Lenz,

regardful of etiquette, presented them to the blacksmith.

There was one more booth of a similar kind. But the proprietor had smelt a rat and was just declaring it closed as we came up. The blacksmith was making trouble; he had observed that here beer bottles were to be contended for. But we declined. The chap at this booth had only one arm.

With a large following we arrived at the Cadillac.

"Now what?" asked Lenz, scratching his head. "We'd better tie the pram on behind."

"Sure," said I, "but you'll have to get in and steer so that it doesn't tip over."

Patricia Hollmann protested. She was afraid Lenz would actually do it.

"All right," said Lenz, "then we had better divide up. The two teddy bears go to you. The gramophone records too. Now what about the frying pan?"

The girl shook her head. "Passes to the workshop, then," announced Gottfried. "Take it, Bob, you're master of the order of the poached egg. The coffeepot?"

The girl nodded toward Lina. The cook blushed. Gottfried presented her with the thing as at a prize-giving. Then he hauled out the crockery basin. "The washing gear here? To our old friend, no? He'll have use for it in his job. The alarm clock likewise. Blacksmiths are heavy sleepers."

I handed Gottfried the flower vase. He passed it to Lina. Stammering, she tried to decline. Her eyes were glued on the penitent Magdalene. She feared, if she took the vase, the smith would get the picture.

"I'm very fond of art," she burst out.

"Fräulein," asked Lenz, with a grand gesture turning round, "what do you say to that?"

Patricia Hollmann took the picture and gave it to the cook.

"It is a very beautiful picture, Lina," said she, smiling.

"Hang it up over your bed and take it to heart," added Lenz.

Lina seized it. She gave a great gulp of gratitude.

"And now you," said Lenz pensively, to the pram.

Despite her joy over the Magdalene, Lina's eyes were again covetous. The smith observed that one could never be sure when one might not need such a thing, and laughed so at the idea that he dropped one of the wine bottles.

But Lenz was against it. "Just a moment. I saw something a while back,"

said he and disappeared. A few minutes later he collected the cart and pushed off with it. "That's settled," said he when he came back alone.

We climbed into the Cadillac. "Like Christmas," said Lina happily amid all her junk, giving us a red hand in farewell.

The smith took us aside a moment. "Look here," said he, "if you ever have anyone you want socked—I live in Leibnitzstrasse sixteen, rear court, second staircase on the left. If it's more, then I'll come with my gang."

"That's agreed," we replied and drove off.

As we turned the corner of the amusement park, Gottfried pointed out the window. There was our pram—a real child in it, and a pale, still rather agitated woman beside it, examining it.

"Good, eh?" observed Gottfried.

"Take her the teddy bears!" cried Patricia Hollmann. "They belong with it."

"One perhaps," said Lenz. "You must keep one."

"No, both."

"All right." Lenz sprang out of the car, threw the plush things into the woman's arms, and, before she could say a word, dashed off as if he were pursued.

"So," said he, out of breath, "now I begin to feel quite sick at my own nobility. Put me down at the International. I must absolutely have a brandy."

He got out and I took the girl home. It was different from last time. She stood in the doorway and the light from the lamps flickered over her face. She looked lovely. I should have liked to go in with her.

"Good night," said I, "sleep well."

"Good night."

She gave me her hand and went up the steps. I watched her until the light went out. Then I drove off in the Cadillac. I felt extraordinary. It was not like other nights when one had been crazy about some girl. There was tenderness in it. Tenderness, and the desire to be able for once to let go.

I went to Lenz at the International. It was almost empty. In one corner sat Fritzi with her friend Alois, the waiter. They were quarrelling. Gottfried was sitting on the sofa by the bar with Mimi and Wally. He was charming with them both, especially Mimi, poor old creature.

The girls left soon. They must be about their business; now was the best

time. Mimi groaned and sighed for her varicose veins. I sat down beside Gottfried.

"Now fire away," said I.

"What for, Bob?" he replied to my amazement. "It's quite right, what you're doing."

I was relieved that he took it so quietly. "I used to sing a different tune," said I.

He waved his hand. "Nonsense."

I ordered a rum.

"You know," said I then; "I haven't the least idea who she is or anything. Nor how she stands with Binding. Did he say anything to you?"

He looked at me. "Does that worry you?"

"No."

"Thought not. The mantle fits you pretty well, anyway."

I reddened.

"You don't need to blush. You're quite right. I wish I could."

I was silent awhile.

"How's that, Gottfried?" said I at last.

He looked at me. "Because anything else is dirt, Bob. Because nothing pays these days. Remember what Ferdinand told you yesterday. He's not far wrong, the old corpse painter. . . . Well, anyway, sit up to the old tin can there and play us a few of the old army songs."

I played the "Three Lilies" and the *"Argonnermald!"* They sounded ghostly in the empty room, when one remembered where we used to sing them.

Chapter VII

Two days later Köster came swiftly out of the office. "Bob, your Blumenthal has just rung up. You're to go with the Cadillac at eleven. He wants to make a trial run."

I flung down the screwdriver and spanner. "Otto, if only we could do it!"

"What did I tell you," came up from Lenz in the pit under the Ford. "I told you he'd come back. Always listen to Gottfried."

"You hold your tongue, this situation is serious," I shouted down to him. "Otto, what's the outside I can drop the price?"

"Two thousand at the outside. At the absolute outside two thousand, two hundred. Then, if there's nothing for it, two five. If you see you're dealing with a complete maniac, two six. But tell him in that case we will curse him to all eternity."

"Good."

We polished the car till it shone. I got in. Köster laid a hand on my shoulder. "Bob, remember your duty as a soldier. Defend the honour of the workshop with your blood if need be. Die standing, your hand on Blumenthal's wallet."

"Right," I grinned.

Lenz hauled a medallion from his pocket and held it before my face. "Hold the amulet, Bob!"

"All right." I took it.

"Abracadabra, great Siva," prayed Gottfried, "endue this poor mutt with strength and courage! Wait—here, better still, take it with you. There, now spit three times."

"Done," said I; spat at his feet and drove off, past Jupp who saluted excitedly with the petrol pipe.

En route I bought some pinks arranged them artistically in the cut-glass vases of the car—a speculation on Frau Blumenthal.

Unfortunately Blumenthal received me in his office, not at his house. I had to wait a quarter of an hour. Dearest, I thought, I know that trick; you won't wear me out that way. I pumped a pretty typist in the anteroom, to

whom I gave the pink in my buttonhole, about the business. Woollens, turnover good, nine in the office, one sleeping partner, keenest rival Meyer and Son, young Meyer drove a red, two-seater Essex—so far I got when Blumenthal called me.

He shot at sight with both barrels.

"Young man," said he, "I haven't much time. Last I saw, your price was mere wish-fulfillment. Now, hand on heart, what does the car cost?"

"Seven thousand marks," I replied.

He turned away sharply. "Then there's nothing doing."

"Herr Blumenthal," said I, "just you look at the car once more—"

"Quite unnecessary," he interrupted. "I saw all I want to see last time."

"There is seeing and seeing," I explained. "You should see the details. The lacquer, first class, from Voll and Ruhrbeck, cost price two hundred and fifty marks, the springs—new, catalogue price six hundred marks—makes eight hundred and fifty already. The upholstery, finest corduroy—"

He dismissed it. I started again. I invited him to inspect the luxurious fittings, the magnificent coach-leather hood, the chromium radiator, the modern buffers, sixty marks the pair. Like a mother struggling to get back to her child I tried to persuade Bluementhal to come down to the Cadillac. I knew, like Antaeus, that if I could once get in touch with the earth again I should find new strength. Prices lose much of their abstract terror when one can show something for them.

But Blumenthal also knew that his strength lay behind his writing desk. He removed his glasses and now went for me properly. We fought like tiger and python. Blumenthal was the python. Before I could turn round he had already reduced me fifteen hundred marks.

I began to get alarmed and nervous. I felt in my pocket and held Gottfried's amulet tight in my hand.

"Herr Blumenthal," said I, pretty exhausted, "it is one o'clock; you will be wanting to go to lunch." At all costs I wanted to get out of this office where prices melted like snow.

"I don't lunch till two," explained Blumenthal unperturbed, "but I'll tell you what. We might make a trial run now." I breathed again.

We drove to his house. To my surprise once in the car he was a changed man. Good-humouredly he told me the joke about the Emperor Franz Josef, which I knew long ago. I told him the one about the tram driver; then he told me the one about the Saxon who.lost his way; I followed immediately with

the one about the Scotch lovers. Not until we were outside his house did we become serious again. He asked me to wait while he fetched his wife.

"Dear fat friend," said I to the Cadillac, patting the radiator, "there's sure some new devilry behind all that joking. But don't you worry, we'll find a home for you yet. He'll buy you all right—when a Jew comes back he buys. When a Christian comes back he's still got a long way to go. He makes half a dozen trial runs, to save himself taxi fares, and then it suddenly occurs to him he wants to buy' a kitchen range instead. No, no, Jews are all right, they know what they want. But my good friend, if I come down another hundred marks to this direct descendant of the pugnacious Judas Maccabaeus, may I never drink another schnapps in all my life."

Frau Blumenthal appeared. I remembered a counsel of Lenz's and changed from a warrior into a cavalier. Blumenthal greeted the change with a villainous grin. The man was of iron. He ought to have been selling locomotives, not woollens.

I saw to it that he sat in the back, and Frau Blumenthal beside me.

"Where would you like me to drive you, madam?" I asked meltingly.

"Anywhere you like," said she with a motherly smile.

I began to talk. It was a pleasure to have a harmless human being to deal with. I spoke quietly, so that Blumenthal could not catch much. I talked more easily so. It was bad enough to have him sitting behind me.

We pulled up. I got out and looked at my enemy steadily. "You must admit anyway that the car runs like butter, Herr Blumenthal."

"Why talk of butter, young man," he countered with a curious friendliness, "when the tax eats it all? The car costs too much in tax. You told me as much."

"Herr Blumenthal," said I in an effort to fix the tone, "you are a businessman, I can speak plainly to you. That isn't a tax, it's an investment. Tell me, what is it a business most wants to-day? You know very well—not capital, as in the old days: it wants credit. And how does one get it? By putting a good face on it. A Cadillac now is solid and smart, comfortable but not old-fashioned—healthy middle class—it's a living advertisement for any business."

Blumenthal turned with amusement to his wife. "He has a Jewish head, eh? Young man," said he then, still in a familiar tone, "the best advertisement for solidity to-day is a shabby suit and a bus ticket. If we two had the money that is still unpaid for all the smart cars there are flitting about, we could sit

down and rest quietly. Take it from me. In confidence."

I looked at him suspiciously. What was he up to now, with his friendliness? Or had the presence of his wife damped his fighting spirit? I decided to fire a big gun.

"A Cadillac like this is a very different proposition from an Essex, for example, isn't it so, Frau Blumenthal? Young Meyer of Meyer and Son drives one, but I would not take as a gift any of these loud red sleighs—"

I heard Blumenthal snort, and went on quickly: "Besides the colour here suits you so well, madam—soft cobalt blue with blond—"

I saw Blumenthal suddenly grinning like a cageful of monkeys. "Meyer and Son; shrewd, shrewd—" he groaned. "And now flattery—flattery—"

I glanced at him. I could not believe my eyes; it was right.

At once I struck again in the same vein: "Herr Blumenthal, you stop me if I go wrong. To a woman flattery is not flattery. It is a compliment, which unfortunately in these miserable days has become all too rare. A woman is not a piece of steel furniture; she is a flower—she does not ask for reality; she wants the warm, gay sun of flattery. It is better to say something pretty to her every day, than to slave grimly for her all your life. Take it from me. Also in confidence. And anyway what I said was not flattery, but plain scientific fact. Blue does go with blond."

"Well roared, lion," said Blumenthal, beaming. "Look here, Herr Lohkamp! I know I can easily knock you down another thousand marks—"

I stepped back a pace. Wily devil, thought I; now for the expected blow. I saw myself already wandering through life a total abstainer, and cast the look of a martyred young deer at Frau Blumenthal.

"But, Father—" said she.

"Now, Mother," he replied. "What I say is, I could—but I won't. It has given me pleasure as a businessman, the way you have worked. A trifle too fanciful perhaps, but all the same, that about Meyer and Son was very good. Is your mother Jewish?"

"No."

"Have you ever been in ready-mades?"

"Yes."

"You see, hence the style. In what branch?"

"Souls," I replied. "I was meant for a schoolteacher."

"Herr Lohkamp," said Blumenthal. "Respects! If you are ever out of a job, look me up."

He wrote out a cheque and gave it to me. I could hardly believe my eyes. Prepayment! A miracle!

"Herr Blumenthal," said I, overcome, "allow me to include free with the car two cut-glass ash-trays and a first class rubber mat."

"Grand," he remarked. "Even old Blumenthal gets'something given him." Then he invited me to supper the next evening.

Frau Blumenthal smiled motherly approval. "There will be stuffed pike," said she gently.

"A delicacy," said I. "Then I'll bring the car along. We'll put in the final touches first thing in the morning."

I flew back to the workshop like a swallow. But Lenz and Otto had gone out to lunch. I should have to moderate my triumph. Only Jupp was there.

"Sold?" he asked.

"You'd like to know that, wouldn't you?" said I. "Here's a dollar. Go and build yourself an aeroplane."

"It is sold, then," grinned Jupp.

"I'm going out now to eat," said I; "but woe betide you if you say anything to the others before I get back."

"Herr Lohkamp," he assured me, spinning the dollar in the air, "I'm a grave."

"You look like it," said I and stepped on the gas.

As I entered the yard again Jupp made me a sign. "What's the matter?" I asked. "Have you opened your trap?"

"Herr Lohkamp! Like iron!" He grinned. "Only, the Ford bloke is inside."

I left the Cadillac in the yard and went into the workshop. The baker was there, just bending over a book of colour samples. He had on a checked overcoat with a broad mourning band. Beside him was standing a pretty creature with quick black eyes, an open cloak with rabbit-fur trimmings, and patent leather shoes too small for her. They were entertaining themselves with the colour of the varnish. The dark person was for brilliant cinnobar; but the baker had it against red, as he was still in mourning. He suggested a pale yellow-grey.

"Ach, what," pouted the dark one; "a Ford has to be strikingly varnished. Otherwise it looks like nothing at all."

She shot imploring glances at us, shrugged her shoulders when the baker resisted, grimaced and winked at us. A gay spark! Finally they compromised on mignonette green. The girl wanted a bright hood to go with it. But there the baker was firm—the mourning must come out somewhere. He held out for a black leather hood—and incidentally did a good stroke of business, in that not only was he getting the hood for nothing, but leather was dearer than fabric.

The two left. But in the yard was yet another delay. The dark one no sooner spotted the Cadillac than she shot up to it. "Oh, look, Puppi, there is a car! Marvellous! That's the sort I like."

The next moment she had the door open and was sitting inside, beaming with pleasure. "These are seats! Superb! Like club armchairs. A different matter from the Ford!"

"Now, come along," said Puppi ill-humouredly.

Lenz gave me a dig—I should go into action and try to unload the car on the baker. I looked at Gottfried condescendingly and said nothing. He prodded me harder. I prodded him in return and turned my back on him.

With difficulty the baker at last got his black jewel out of the car, and, rather sulky and decidedly annoyed, made off.

We watched the couple go. "A man of snap decisions," said I. "Repaired car—new wife—hats off!"

"Well," said Köster, "he'll have his joy of her yet."

They had barely turned the corner when Gottfried broke loose. "Are you quite Godforsaken, Bob, missing an opportunity like that? Why, that was a textbook example of when to hoe in!"

"Lance-corporal Lenz," I replied, "put your heels together when you speak to a superior officer. Do you think I'm a bigamist to marry off the car twice?"

It was a great moment to see Gottfried then. His eyes were like plates. "Don't jest with holy things," he stammered.

I ignored him altogether and turned to Köster. "Say farewell, Otto, to our little Cadillac. She belongs to us no more. From now on she will lend lustre to the underpants trade. Let's hope she has a good life there. Not so heroic as with us, perhaps—but safer."

I pulled out the cheque. Lenz almost fell to pieces. "No! What? You

mean—paid?" he said in a hoarse whisper.

"How much do you think, then, you beginners?" I asked, waving the cheque to and fro. "Guess."

"Four," shouted Lenz with closed eyes.

"Four five," said Köster.

"Five," shouted Jupp from the pump.

"Five five," I crashed in.

Lenz tore the cheque from my hand. "Impossible. Then it won't be covered."

"Herr Lenz," said I with dignity, "that cheque is as sound as you are unsound. My friend Blumenthal is good for twenty times the amount. My friend, you understand, with whom I shall be eating stuffed pike to-morrow night. Let that be an example. Cement a friendship, get paid in advance, and be invited to supper—that's what's called salesmanship. Now you can stand easy."

Gottfried gathered himself together with difficulty. He tried a last shot. "My advertisement, and the amulet."

I passed him over the medallion. "Here's your dog license. Forgot I had it."

"You've sold like a past master, Bob," said Köster. "Thank God we're rid of the sleigh. We can damned well do with the cash."

"Will you give me an advance of fifty marks?" I asked.

"A hundred. You've earned it."

"You wouldn't like an advance of my grey overcoat as well, I suppose?" asked Gottfried with half-shut eyes.

"Do you want to go into hospital, you miserable, indiscreet bastard?" I retorted.

"Well, boys, I think we close for to-day," proposed Köster. "We've made enough for one day, and one should not tempt God. What about taking Karl out and training for the race?" Jupp had long since abandoned the petrol pump. He was now wiping his hands excitedly. "I suppose I take command here again, then, Herr Köster, eh?"

"No, Jupp," said Otto, laughing. "You're coming too." We drove first to the bank and paid in the cheque. Lenz did not rest until he was sure it was in order. Then we set off, blowing sparks from the exhaust.

Chapter VIII

I stood confronting my landlady. "Now what is it?" demanded Frau Zalewski.

"Nothing," I replied. "I only want to pay my rent."

It was still three days before it was due and Frau Zalewski almost fell over with astonishment.

"There's something behind it," she remarked.

"Not a thing," said I. "May I have the two brocade armchairs out of your sitting room for to-morrow evening?"

She put her arms on her fat hips ready for battle. "Now we have it! Don't you like your room?"

"Oh yes, but I like the brocade armchairs better."

I explained that I was expecting perhaps a visit from a cousin and would like to have the room look nice. She laughed so that her bosom simply quaked.

"Cousin?" she repeated scornfully. "And when does the cousin arrive?"

"It's not quite certain yet," said I, "but, if she does come, early of course; early in the evening, to supper. And anyway why shouldn't there be cousins, Frau Zalewski?"

"There are such things," she replied; "but one doesn't borrow armchairs for them."

"Well, I do," I contested. "I've a very strong family sense."

"You look like it. Rum drinkers that you all are. You can have the brocade armchairs. Put the red plush in the parlour for the time being."

"Thank you very much. I'll put them all back to-morrow. The carpet as well."

"Carpet?" She turned round. "Who said a word about a carpet?"

"I did. And you did yourself, just now."

She looked at me indignantly.

"But they belong together," said I. "The armchairs stand on it, you see."

"Herr Lohkamp," declared Frau Zalewski majestically, "don't push it too far. Moderation in all things, as Zalewski, rest his soul, used to say. You might take that to heart too."

I knew that the late Zalewski, rest his soul, despite ,his motto, literally drank himself to death. His wife had on other occasions told me so often

enough. But that didn't worry her. She used her husband as other folk do the Bible—for quotations. And the longer he was dead the harder she worked him. He now had something for all occasions—just like the Bible.

I was busy preparing my room. I had rung up Patricia Hollmann during the afternoon. She had been sick and I had not seen her for almost a week. Now we had a date for eight o'clock and I had suggested we should have supper at my place and afterwaTds go to the cinema.

The brocade armchairs and the carpet looked superb; but the lighting was dreadful. So I knocked next door at the Hasses' to borrow a table lamp.

Frau Hasse was sitting wearily by the window. Her husband was not in yet. He worked voluntarily two hours overtime every day merely not to get dismissed. The woman reminded one of a sick bird. In her spongy, ageing features was still discernible the small face of a child—a disappointed sad child.

I made my request. She brightened at once and got me the lamp. *"Ach,* yes," said she with a sigh. "When I think now . . ."

I knew the history. It was about the prospects she might have had, had she not accepted Hasse. I knew the same story, but from Hasse's angle. There it was of the prospects he might have had, had he stayed a bachelor. It was probably the commonest story in the world. And the most futile.

I listened awhile, uttered a few platitudes, and went on to Erna Bönig to get her gramophone.

Frau Hasse referred to Erna only as "the person next door." She despised her because she envied her. I quite liked her. She made no complaints against life and knew that one must make the best of it if one is to get even a little bit of what is called happiness. She knew too that one must pay for it twice and three times over. Happiness is the most uncertain thing in the world and has the highest price.

Erna knelt down in front of her box and picked out for me a number of records. "Do you want any foxtrots?"

"No," I replied. "I can't dance."

She looked up in amazement. "You can't dance? Whatever do you do then, when you go out?"

"I dance with my gullet. That's quite good too."

She shook her head. "A husband of mine who couldn't dance would get

the sack."

"You have strict principles," I replied. "But you have got other records. Only the other day you were playing a very lovely one—it was a woman's voice with a sort of Hawaiian accompaniment—"

"Ah, that is marvellous. 'How could I live without thee?' —wasn't it?"

"That's right. What things these song writers do think of! I guess they're the only romantics left."

She laughed. "But why not? You know a gramophone like this is a sort of family history. Once people used to write verses in albums, nowadays they give one another gramophone records. If I want to recall some particular occasion, I have only to put on the records of that time, and there it all is again."

I looked down on the pile of discs lying on the floor. "Measured by that, you must have a stack of memories, Erna."

She stood up and brushed back her red hair. "Yes," said she, thrusting the heap aside with her foot. "But I'd sooner have one good one."

I unpacked the things I had bought for supper and arranged everything as well as I could. No help was to be expected for me from the kitchen. I stood in too badly with Frida for that. The least she would have done would be to break something. But it wasn't so bad, and soon I hardly knew my old room again in its new splendour. The armchairs, the lamp, the covered table—I felt a restless expectancy gathering in me.

I set off, though I had still more than an hour to wait. Outside the wind was blowing in long gusts round the corners of the streets. The lamps were already alight. The darkness between the houses was blue as the sea, and the International floated in it like a warship about to cast off. With one leap I was aboard.

"Hopla, Robert," said Rosa.

"What are you doing here, then?" Tasked. "Not going, on tour?"

"It's too early yet."

Alois slithered up. "Single?" he asked.

"Triple," said I.

"Going it heavy," observed Rosa,

"Need something stiff," said I tipping down the rum.

"Won't you play something?" asked Rosa.

I shook my head. "Don't feel like it to-day. Too windy, Rosa. How's the kid?"

She smiled with all her gold teeth. "Well—touch wood! I'll see her again to-morrow. Have done pretty well this week; the old buck is feeling the spring again. I'm taking her a new coat. Red wool."

"Red wool! All the rage," said I.

Rosa beamed. "You are a cavalier, Bob."

"Let's hope you're right there," said I. "Come, have one with me. Anisette, isn't it?"

She nodded. Alois brought it and we touched glasses. "Tell me, Rosa, what do you really think about love?" I asked. "You ought to know something about it."

She burst into peals of laughter.

"Well, of all the things—" said she then. "Love. *Ach,* my Arthur—whenever I think of the scamp my knees still turn to water. I'll tell you something, Bob, seriously— Human life is too long for love. Too long, that's all. My Arthur told me that when he cleared off. And it's right. Love is wonderful. But for one it is always too long. And the other one, he just sits there and stares. Stares like mad."

"Agreed," said I. "On the other hand, without love one is no better than a mere walking corpse."

"Do as I did," replied Rosa, "get yourself a kid. Then you have something to love and peace of mind as well."

"Not a bad idea," said I. "Hasn't come my way yet."

Rosa wagged her head dreamily. "All the kicks I've had from my Arthur—and yet if he walked in here now with his bowler hat on the back of his head—man, it makes me cry just to think of."

"Well, let's drink to Arthur," said I.

Rosa laughed. "To the son-of-a-bitch, good health!" We emptied our glasses. *"Au revoir,* Rosa. Good business." "*Au revoir*, Bob."

The house door banged.

"Hello," said Patricia Hollmann, "so deep in thought?"

"Not at all. But how are you? Are you better again? What's been wrong?"

"Ach, nothing special. Cold and a bit of fever."

She certainly did not look sick or worn. On the contrary her eyes seemed bigger and brighter than I had ever seen them, her face was a bit flushed, and her movements graceful as a young animal's.

"You look wonderful," said I. "Quite fit. We'll be able to do a heap of things."

"That would be fine," she replied. "But it can't be done to-day. I can't to-day."

I stared at her, uncomprehendingly. "You can't?"

She shook her head. "No, unfortunately."

I still did not understand. I supposed she had reconsidered coming to my place and merely did not wish to have supper there.

"I rang up a few minutes ago, so that you shouldn't come in vain. But you'd gone out already."

Now I realised at last. "You mean you can't really? Not the whole evening?" I asked.

"Not this time. I've a most important interview. Unfortunately I only learned of it half an hour ago."

"Can't you postpone it? till to-morrow? We agreed on to-day!"

"Can't be done." She smiled. "It's a sort of business affair."

I was quite bowled over. I had reckoned on everything but that. I didn't believe a word she said. Business—she did not look like business. It was only an excuse, probably. Certainly, even. What important interviews does anyone have in the evening? Morning's the time for that sort of thing. And anyway one didn't hear of them only half an hour beforehand. She simply did not want to, that was all.

I was disappointed in quite a childish fashion. Only now" did I realise how much I had been looking forward to the evening. I was vexed that I was so annoyed, and did not want her to see it.

"Very good," said I, "then there's nothing doing. *Au revoir."*

She looked at me searchingly. "There's not all that hurry. I haven't to be there till nine. We could go for a short walk. I haven't been out the whole week."

"All right," said I reluctantly. I suddenly felt empty and tired.

We walked along the street. The night had cleared and the stars stood bright between the roofs. We came to a grassy space where were a few shrubs in the shadow. Patricia Hollmann stopped short.

"Lilac," said she. "I smell lilac! But that's quite impossible, it's much too

early of course."

"I don't smell anything," I replied.

"Yes!" She leaned over the railing.

"It's a *Daphne indica,* lady," came a thick voice out of the darkness.

A municipal gardener with a cap with a metal badge was there leaning against a tree. Swaying a bit, he came toward us. The neck of a bottle glinted from his pocket. "We put it in to-day," he explained with a hiccough. "It's over there."

"Thank you," said Patricia Hollmann and turned tome. "Can't you smell anything yet?"

"Yes, I smell something now all right," I replied ungraciously. "Good old brandy."

"Go up to the top of the form!" The chap in the shadows belched loudly.

I could smell perfectly well the heavy, sweet perfume that floated out of the darkness; but I would not have admitted it for anything in the world.

The girl laughed and took a deep breath. "How lovely it is, when you have been so long shut up in a room. It's a shame I have to go. This Binding—always in a hurry and at the last minute—I think he might really have postponed it till to-morrow."

"Binding?" I asked. "You've an appointment with Binding?"

She nodded. "With Binding and someone else. It's the someone else that counts. Real serious business. Can you imagine it?"

"No," I replied. "I can't imagine it."

She laughed and went on talking. But I was not listening any longer. Binding—it entered me like a stroke of lightning. I did not reflect that after all she had known him much longer than me—I saw only his big Buick, larger than life and gleaming; his expensive suit and his fat pocket wallet appeared before my eyes. My poor, gallant, tricked-out old room! What had I been thinking of! Hasse's lamp, Zalewski's armchairs! The girl was not for me, of course. What was I, anyway? A pedestrian who once borrowed a Cadillac, an uncouth schnapps drinker, that was all. The sort of thing you could pick up at any street corner. Already I saw the porter at the "Bunch of Grapes" salute Binding, I saw bright, warm, elegant rooms, clouds of cigarette smoke, and smart people, I heard music and laughter—laughter at me. Back, thought I, back quickly. An idea, a hope—that was already a great deal. It was senseless to get entangled on the strength of that. There was nothing for it but back.

"We could meet to-morrow night perhaps," said Patricia Hollmann.

"I've no time to-morrow evening," I replied.

"Well, the day after, or sometime during the week. I have nothing on the next few days."

"It would be difficult," said I. "We got a rush job in to-day, we'll probably have to work on it well into the night the whole week."

It was a swindle, but I could not help it. There was too much cold anger and humiliation in me.

We crossed the square and went along the street toward the graveyard. From the direction of the International I saw Rosa approaching. Her high boots were gleaming. I could have turned off, and at another time probably would have done so; but now I kept straight on toward her. Rosa looked me over as if we were total strangers. That was a matter of course; none of these girls recognise one when one is not alone.

"Day, Rosa," said I.

Taken aback she looked first at me, then at Patricia Hollmann, nodded hastily and walked on embarrassed. A few paces behind her came Fritzi, dangling a handbag, with very red lips and swaying hips. She looked through me indifferently as if I had been a pane of glass.

"Grüss Gott, Fritzi," said I.

She inclined her head like a queen and in no way betrayed her astonishment; but I heard her pace quicken when she was past—she was going to discuss the matter with Rosa. I might still have turned into a bystreet, for I knew the rest would also be coming—it was just the time for the first big patrol. But in a sort of spite I kept on— why should I avoid them? I knew them a sight better than I did the girl beside me with her Binding and his Buick. She should see—see it thoroughly.

There they came, past the long row of street lamps—

Wally, the beautiful, pale, slim, elegant; Lina with the wooden leg; the strapping Erria; Marion the chicken; Margot of the red cheeks; the pansy, Kiki, in a. squirrel coat; and lastly Mimi, the grandmother with the varicose veins, looking as shabby as an owl. I greeted every one, and when we came to Mother at the sausage stall, I shook her vigorously by the hand.

"You have a lot of acquaintances here," said Patricia Hollmann after a while.

"Yes, of a sort," I replied bluntly.

I noticed that she looked at me. "I think we should turn round now," said she after a time.

"Yes," I replied. "I think so too."

We stopped at the house door.

"Good luck," said I, "and lots of fun."

She did not answer. With some difficulty I detached my eyes from the press-button on the door and looked at her. And really—I hardly believed my eyes—there she stood, and, instead of being thoroughly snappy, around her lips there was a twitching, her eyes twinkled; and then she laughed, heartily and untrammelled—simply laughed at me.

"You baby," said she, "O God, what a baby you are!"

I stared at her. "Well, if you—" said I then. "Anyway—" and suddenly I saw the situation. "You find me a bit idiotic, I suppose, eh?"

"One might put it that way."

She looked marvellous, her face flickered over by the lamplight—young, merry and beautiful. Swiftly I took a step forward and drew her to me, let her think what she may. Her silky hair brushing my cheek, her face close in front of mine, I detected the faint peach smell of ber skin; then her eyes came nearer and suddenly I felt her lips on my mouth. . . .

She was gone before I rightly knew what had happened. Like a brindled ass I stood looking after her. "Holy Moses!" said I then, out loud.

I retraced my steps and passed Mother's sausage stall once more. "Give me a large bockwurst," said I, beaming.

"With mustard?" asked Mother in her clean white apron.

"With a lot of mustard, Mother!"

I ate the sausage greedily where I stood and had Alois bring me out a glass of beer from the International. "Man is a queer creature, Mother, eh?" said I.

"I should say so," replied Mother eagerly. "A gentleman came here yesterday, ate two Wieners with mustard and afterwards couldn't pay for them. It was late, there was nobody about, what could I do? Well, you know, I let him ge. And just think of it, to-day he comes back and pays for the Wieners and shouts me a drink as well!"

"A pre-war nature, Mother. And how's business otherwise?"

"Bad! Yesterday seven brace of Wieners and nine bock-wursts. You know, if I hadn't the girls, I'd have been finished long ago."

The girls were the prostitutes who supported Mother to the best of their

ability. When they had captured a suitor and it was in any way possible, they would bring him round by Mother's stall to eat a bockwurst first, so that the old woman should make something.

"It will soon be getting warm now," Mother continued; "but in winter, in the wet and the cold—put on what clothes you like, you catch something."

"Give me another bockwurst," said I; "I've got a kind of wish to live. And how are things at home?"

She looked at me out of her water-bright, little eyes. "Always the same. He sold the bed the other day."

Mother was married. Ten years ago her husband had slipped, when jumping off a moving underground train, and been run over. They had to take off both his legs. The accident had had an extraordinary effect on him. As a cripple he was so humiliated before his wife that he never slept with her again. In addition to that, in the hospital he had learned to take morphia. That brought him down very speedily; he got into homosexual circles, and before long the man who had been a normal husband for fifty years, was going around only with nancy boys. To get money for the boys and the morphia, he took everything of Mother's he could lay hands on and sold it. But Mother stuck to him, though he used often to beat her. Every night until four in the morning she stood with her son at the sausage stall. During the day she took in washing and did charring. All the time she suffered from some internal complaint and weighed barely ninety pounds—yet one never saw her other than friendly. She believed things were still not so bad with her. Occasionally, when he was feeling miserable, her husband would come to her and cry. Those were her best times.

"Have you still got your good job?" she asked me.

I nodded. "Yes, Mother. I earn pretty well now."

"See that you keep it."

"I'll see to it, Mother."

I came home. In the hall, as if called of God, stood the kitchen maid, Frida.

"You are a nice child," said I, for I felt moved to do some good deed.

She made a face as if she had drunk vinegar.

"Seriously," I went on, "what's the use of always quarrelling? Life's too short, Frida, and full of accidents and perils. People should stand together

these days. Let's make peace."

She ignored my outstretched hand, muttered something about damned boozing, and, banging the door, vanished.

I knocked at Georg Block's. A strip of light was visible under his door. He was cramming.

"Come, Georg—eats," said I.

He looked up. His pale face flushed. "I'm not hungry."

He thought it was from pity. So he did not want to.

"Well, come and have a look. It'll go bad otherwise. Do me the favour."

' As we went down the passage I noticed that Erna Bönig's door was open a chink. Behind it I heard a light breathing. "Aha," thought I, and heard the lock turn cautiously at the Hasses' and the door there likewise give a centimeter. The entire pension was on the watch, apparently, for my cousin.

In the harsh top light of my digs stood Frau Zalewski's brocade armchairs. The Hasses' lamp made a fine display, the pineapple shone, the super leberwurst, the salmon, the bottle of sherry . . .

When I and the speechless Georg were sailing well in, there was a knock on the door. I knew what was coming.

"Get ready, Georg," I whispered, and called "Come in!"

The door opened and, bursting with curiosity, in walked Frau Zalewski. For the first time in my life she brought the post herself—a circular exhorting me to eat more food. She was got up like a fairy—a real great lady out of the good old days, lace dress with fringed shawl and brooch with the portrait of the late Zalewski as a pendant. A sugar-sweet smile suddenly froze on her face; startled, she stared at the embarrassed Georg. I burst into heartless laughter. She recovered herself swiftly.

"Aha, put off," said she poisonously.

"True," I agreed, still absorbed in her get-up. What a mercy the invitation had fallen through!

Mother Zalewski looked at me disparagingly. "And you can laugh? I always did say, where others have hearts you have a schnapps bottle."

"A bon mot," I replied. "But won't you do us the honour, Frau Zalewski?"

She hesitated. But curiosity triumphed, and the hope of learning something yet. I opened the bottle of sherry.

Later, when all was quiet, I took my coat and a blanket and slipped across the passage to the telephone. I knelt down in front of the table on which the instrument stood, placed the coat and blanket over my head, lifted the re ceiver and with my left hand held the coat together from below. Thus I was sure no one could overhear me. The Pension Zalewski possessed immensely long, inquisitive ears.

I was in luck. Patricia Hollmann was home.

"Have you been back long from your mysterious interview?" I asked.

"About an hour."

"Pity. If I had known that—"

She laughed. "No, it wouldn't have been any use. I'm in bed and am a bit feverish again. It's a good thing I got, home early."

"Fever? What sort of fever?"

"Ach, a boring business. And what have you been doing this evening?"

"I've been discussing the world situation with my landlady. And you? Did your affair come off?"

"I hope it came off."

In my cubby-hole it was getting devilish hot. So I opened the curtain whenever the girl was speaking, took a quick breath of the cool air outside and closed the lid again when I myself spoke close into the microphone.

"Is there nobody among your friends called Robert?" I asked.

She laughed. "I don't think so."

"A pity. I should like to have heard how you pronounce it. Won't you just try anyway?"

She laughed again.

"Just for a joke," said I. "For instance: 'Robert is an ass.'"

"Robert is a baby, and long may he be one."

"You have a wonderful pronunciation," said I. "And now let us try it with Bob. Thus: 'Bob is—'"

"Bob is a drunkard," said the soft, remote voice slowly; "and now I must sleep—I've taken a sleeping draught and my head is singing already."

"Yes—good night—sleep well—"

I put down the receiver, and pushed the coat and blanket aside. Then I straightened up and suddenly stiffened. Like a ghost one pace behind me stood the retired accountant who lived in the room next the kitchen. I grunted something or other, indignantly.

"Pst!" said he and grinned.

"Pst!" I responded and wished him in hell.

He raised a finger. "I won't let on—-political, eh?"

"What?" said I astonished.

He winked. "Don't worry. I'm extreme Right, myself. Secret political conversation, eh?"

I understood. "Highly political," said I, now grinning also.

He nodded and whispered: "Long live His Majesty!"

"Three cheers!" I replied. "But now something else: Do you happen to know who it was invented the telephone?"

Astonished, he shook his bald pate.

"Neither do I," said I, "but he must have been a wonderful chap."

Chapter IX

Sunday. The day of the race. Köster had been training every day the last week. Then at night we would work on Karl into the small hours, checking every tiniest screw, oiling and putting him in order. Now we were sitting in the pits waiting for Köster, who had gone to the starting place.

We were all there—Grau, Valentin, Lenz, Patricia Hollmann, and above all Jupp—Jupp in overalls, with racing goggles and helmet. He was Köster's offsider, being the lightest. Lenz had all kinds of doubts—he maintained Jupp's enormous, outstanding ears offered too much wind resistance: either the car would lose twenty kilometres in speed, or turn itself into an aeroplane.

"How did you come by your English Christian name?" Gottfried asked Patricia Hollmann, who was sitting beside him.

"My mother was English. It was her name too: Pat."

"Ah, Pat—that's another matter. That's much easier to say." He produced a glass and a bottle. "So—to good comradeship, Pat! My name's Gottfried."

I stared at him. While I was still labouring around with the full style of address, he could do such things in broad daylight without a blush. And she laughed, and actually called him Gottfried.

But that was nothing to Ferninand Grau. He was com-petely crazy and did not let her out of his sight. He recited rolling verses and explained she must certainly learn to paint. He actually sat her on a box and started to draw her.

"Look here, Ferdinand, old vulture," said I taking the drawing pad away from him, "you stick to the dead. Don't attack living human beings. You tell us some more about the absolute. I'm a bit touchy about the girl."

"Will you drink with me afterwards the remains of my pub keeper's aunt?"

"I don't know about all the remains. But one foot certainly."

"Good. Then I'll oblige you, boy."

The crackle of the engines drifted round the course like machine-gun fire. There was a smell of burning grease, petrol and castor oil. Exciting, wonderful smell; exciting, wonderful tattoo of the motors.

Mechanics on either side in their well-equipped pits were shouting. Ourselves, we had only very meagre supplies. A few tools, plugs, some spare

wheels with reserve tyres that we had managed to get from a firm of manufacturers, several smaller spare parts—that was all. Köster was not driving for any firm. We had to pay for everything ourselves. For that reason we had not very much.

Otto came up, behind him Braumüller already dressed for the race.

"Well, Otto," said he, "if my plugs hold to-day, you're lost. But they won't hold.'"

"Soon see," replied Köster.

Braumüller shook his fist at Karl. "You look out for my Nutcracker!"

The Nutcracker was a heavy, new machine that Braumüller was driving. It ranked as the favourite.

"Karl will make you stretch your legs, Oscar!" Lenz called across to him.

Braumüller was about to reply in good army language, but suddenly swallowed when he saw Patricia Hollmann with us; he made telescope eyes, grinned aimlessly in our direction and pushed off.

"The greater the victory," said Lenz contentedly.

The roar of wheels swept along the track. Köster had to get ready. Karl was entered in the sports-car class.

"We won't be able to help you much, Otto" said I looking at the tools.

He waved a hand. "It won't be necessary. If Karl does break down, a whole workshop won't be any use."

"Well, shouldn't we flag, so you'll know how you lie?"

Köster shook his head. "It's a massed start. I'll see there how it is. Besides Jupp knows his job."

Jupp nodded eagerly. He was trembling with excitement and eating chocolate steadily. But that was only now. With the starting shot he would be as cool again as a tortoise.

"Well, off we go, neck or nothing!"

We pushed Karl out. "Now don't jib at the start, you rascal," said Lenz, fondling the radiator. "Don't disappoint your old father, Karl."

Karl steamed off. We watched him go.

"Just get an eyeful of that contraption," suddenly said someone beside us. "Man, it's got a behind like an ostrich!"

Lenz straightened. "Do you mean the white car?" he asked, red in the face, but still calm.

"I do," replied the gigantic mechanic from the next pit casually over his shoulder, passing the beer bottle to his neighbour. Lenz began to stutter with

wrath and prepared to climb over the low partition. Thank God he had not launched any of his insults. I pulled him back. "Leave that rot," I cursed, "we need you here. Do you want to go into hospital before it starts?" Intractable as a mule, he tried to pull away. He could abide nothing against Karl.

"Look," said I to Patricia Hollmann, "this is the balmy goat that gives himself out as the last of the romantics. Would you believe it, he once wrote a poem to the moon!"

The effect was immediate. It was Gottfried's sore spot.

"Long before the war, it was," he excused himself. "Besides, baby, it's not a crime to go crazy at a race. Is it, Pat?"

"It's not a crime to go crazy at any time."

Gottfried saluted. "A noble saying."

The thunder of the engines drowned all else. The air shuddered. Earth and sky shuddered. The field tore by.

"Last but one," growled Lenz. "The swine has jibbed again at the start."

"No matter," said I; "the start's Karl's weak point. He may get away slowly, but he never stops again." As the uproar died away the loud speakers began their chant. We could hardly believe our eats. Burger, a dangerous rival, had been left standing on the starting line.

The cars came growling back. They chirrupped in the distance like grasshoppers on the track, grew bigger and raced along the opposite side, past the grandstands into the big curve. They were six still, and Köster still second last. We held ourselves in readiness. Echo and re-echo beat louder and fainter from the curve. Then the pack shot out. Number One well ahead, second and third close together behind him, and then Köster. He had gone ahead in the curve and was now riding fourth.

The sun came out from under the clouds. Broad strips of light and grey poured across the track, suddenly flecked with bright and shadow like a tiger. Shadows of clouds drifted across the human sea in the stands. The storm of the engines had entered the blood like some monstrous music. Lenz walked fidgeting around, I chewed a cigarette to pulp, and Patricia Hollmann was sniffing the air like a foal in the early morning. Only Valentin and Grau sat quietly there, and let the sun shine on them.

Again the immense heartbeat of the machines roared back, on past grandstands. We stared across at Köster. He shook his head. He did not mean to change any tyres. As he had returned he had picked up a little. He was now clinging to the black wheel of Number Three. Thus they raced off up the

unending straight.

"Damn!" Lenz took a pull from the bottle.

"He has practised that," said I to Patricia Hollmann. "Going ahead in the curve is his specialty."

"Have a swig out of the bottle too, Pat?" asked Lenz.

I looked at him indignantly. He stared me out.

"I'd prefer a glass," said she. "I haven't learned to drink from a bottle yet."

"There you see it." Lenz fished for a glass. "That's the weakness of modern education."

In the following lap, the field drew farther apart. Braumüller was leading. The first four had now three hundred metres, start. Köster disappeared behind the stands running Number Three radiator to radiator. Then the cars roared up once again. We jumped up. Where was Number Three? Otto came sweeping along alone behind the other two. There—at last Number Three came bumbling up: burst rear tyres. Lenz grinned malicious joy—the car pulled up in front of the next pit. The gigantic mechanic cursed. A minute later the machine was afloat again.

The next laps changed nothing in the order. Lenz laid the stop watch aside and calculated.

"Karl still has reserves," he announced then.

"So have the others, I'm afraid," said I.

"Misbeliever!" He gave me a crushing glance.

Again in the second last lap Köster shook his head. He was going to risk not changing tyres. It was not yet so warm that they could not hold out.

Like a glass-clear beast the tension settled down over the flat and the stands, as the cars entered on the final struggle,

"Touch wood, everyone," said I, grasping the hammer handle. Lenz seized my head. I shoved him off. *"Ach, so;* pardon, it's straw of course," he explained and gripped the barrier.

The rumble swelled to a roar, the roar to a howl, the howl to thunder, to a high-pitched singing as the racing cars touched the limit of revs. Braumüller flew high up the banking; close behind raced the second. With a whirl of dust and grinding back wheels it cut in deeper, further in; he apparently meant to pass below in the curve.

"Fault!" cried Lenz. Already Köster shot in after them; whirring, the car mounted to the extreme edge of the banking; for one instant we froze—it

looked as if he would fly over—then the engine roared and the car sprang round.

"He's gone in on full gas!" I shouted.

Lenz nodded. "Crazy."

We hung far out over the barrier, in a fever of excitement to know if it had succeeded. I lifted Patricia Hollmann onto the tool box. "You'll see better there. Lean on my shoulder. He'll get him in the curve, you see."

"He's got him!" she called. "He's past already."

"He's going after Braumüller. *Himmelherrgott, heiliger Moses!"* cried Lenz again. "He's actually past and going for Braumüller."

In a whirl of thunderstorms the three cars swept out, up; we yelled like madmen, Valentin too; and Grau's tremendous bass now joined us—Köster's folly had succeeded, from above in the turn he passed Number Two, who had wasted himself and lost speed on the sharper, inside curve; and like a hawk he was now stooping for Braumüller, who suddenly was only twenty metres ahead of him and apparently misfiring.

"Go for him, Otto! Go for him! Eat the Nutcracker!" we shouted and waved.

The cars disappeared into the last turn. Lenz prayed aloud for help to all the gods of Asia and South America, and waved his amulet. Patricia Hollmann supported herself on my shoulder, her face peering into the distance ahead like the figurehead of a galleon.

They were coming again. Braumüller's engine was still sputtering; it was missing every other moment. I shut my eyes; Lenz turned his back on the track—we meant to tempt destiny.

A cry brought us round. We were just in time to see Köster pass the finishing line with two metres to spare.

Lenz went crazy. He flung the tools to the ground and did a handstand on the tyres.

"What did you say a while ago?" he bawled when he was upright again, to the herculean mechanic next door. "Contraption?"

"Ach, man, don't quack at me," replied the mechanic, ill-humouredly. And, for the first time since I had known him, the last of the romantics did not get an attack of rage at an insult, but a St. Vitus's dance from laughing.

We were waiting for Otto. He was still occupied with the race

authorities.

"Gottfried," suddenly said a hoarse voice behind us.

We turned round. There stood a human mountain in too tight striped trousers, too tight grey jacket, and a black bowler.

"Alfons!" exclaimed Patricia Hollmann.

"Himself," he conceded.

"We've won, Alfons!" she cried.

"That's the stuff, that's the stuff. Then I guess I've come too late, eh?"

"You never come too late, Alfons," said Lenz.

"Wanted to bring you some grub, as a matter of fact. Cold pork chops and some pickled cutlets. Ready cut."

"Pass it here and sit down, you lovely boy," cried Gottfried. "We'll start right now."

He undid the parcel. "My God," said Patricia Hollmann, "there's enough for a regiment!"

"You can't be sure till after," observed Alfons. "And there's a spot of kümmel as well."

He produced two bottles. "Corks are drawn already."

"That's the stuff, that's the stuff," said the girl. Alfons winked at her benignly.

Karl came blubbering along. Köster and Jupp sprang out. Jupp looked like the youthful Napoleon, his ears glowing. In his arms was a hideous, vulgar, enormous silver cup. "The sixth," said Köster, laughing. "Extraordinary nothing else ever occurs to them."

"Only the milk jug?" asked Alfons, realistically. "No cash?"

"Oh, yes," Otto reassured him, "cash as well."

"Then we're just about swimming in money," said Grau. "Looks like being a nice evening."

"At my place?" asked Alfons.

"Of course—official," replied Lenz.

"Pea soup, giblets, trotters and pig' ears," said Alfons, and even Patricia Hollmann's expression was one of respect. "Gratis, of course," added Alfons.

Braumüller came up, cursing his luck, his hand full of greasy plugs.

"Calm yourself, Oscar," called Lenz. "First prize in the next pram race is sure to be yours."

"Will you give me my revenge in cognac?" asked Brau-Müller.

"By the beer-glass, if you like," said Grau.

"You don't stand an earthly, Herr Braumüller," declared Alfons. "I've never yet seen Köster blued."

"I've never seen Karl in front of me before, either," retorted Braumüller. "Except to-day."

"Bear it with dignity," said Grau. "Here's a glass for you. We'll drink to the overthrow of culture by the machine."

When we broke up we decided to take along with us what was left over of Alfons' provisions. There must be enough for several men still. But we found only the paper.

"Zum Dormenvetter—" said Lenz. "Aha!" He pointed to Jupp, who grinned sheepishly, his hands still full and with a belly that stood off him like a drum. "Another record."

At the supper at Alfons' Pat was having too much success for my liking. I caught Grau once again in the act of proposing to paint her. She laughed and said it took too long for her; photographing would be more convenient.

"And that's more his line too," said I amiably. "Perhaps he will paint you from a photograph."

"Calm yourself, Bob," replied Ferdinand unperturbed, gazing at Pat out of his immense, blue child's eyes. "Schnapps makes you bad-tempered—me human. That's the difference between our generations."

"He's quite ten years older than I," I interposed.

"That is a generation's difference these days," Ferdinand continued. "A lifetime's difference. A thousand years' difference. What do you children understand of existence? You're afraid even of your own feelings. You don't write letters—you telephone; you don't dream—you go for week-end excursions; you are rational in love and irrational in politics—a pitiable race."

I was listening with one ear; with the other I was trying to hear what Braumüller was saying. Already a little tipsy, he was explaining to Patricia Hollmann that she simply must let him teach her to drive. He would show her all his tricks.

At the first opportunity I took him aside. "It's unhealthy, Oscar, for a sportsman to bother too much about women."

"Not for me," observed Braumüller, "I've a wonderful constitution."

"Very well. In that case I'll tell you something that definitely would be unhealthy for you—if you got one from this bottle on the top of the head."

He grinned. "Put up your dagger, boy. Do you know how one knows a cavalier when one sees him? He always behaves decently when he is drunk. And what do you think I am?"

"A *Renommist,"* I replied and left him standing.

I had no fear that any of them really meant to try anything—that was not done amongst us. But I didn't know so well how it might be with the girl—it could very well be that one of the others might suit her admirably. We knew each other too little for me to be sure of that. How could one be sure anyway?

"Should we vanish quietly?" I asked her.

She nodded.

We walked through the streets. It had turned damp. Mists were rising slowly over the city, green and silver mists. I took her hand and put it in my coat pocket. Thus we walked a long while.

"Tired?" I asked.

She shook her head and smiled.

I pointed to the cafés we were passing. "Would you like to go in somewhere?"

"No. Not again yet."

We walked on. Then we came to the graveyard. The trees rustled, their tops were no longer visible. As the mist continued to thicken the fairy light began. May bugs came reeling drunk out of the limes and buzzed heavily against the wet panes of the street lamps. The mist transformed everything, lifted it up and bore it away, the hotel opposite was already afloat like an ocean liner with lighted cabins on the black mirror of the asphalt, the grey shadow of the church behind it became a ghostly sailing-ship with tall masts, lost in the grey-red light; and now the houses, like.a long line of barges, came adrift and began to move.

We sat side by side in silence. The mist made everything unreal—ourselves included. I looked at the girl—the light from the street lamps glinted in her wide-open eyes. "Come," said I, "come close to me—else the mist will bear you away."

She turned her face toward me. She was smiling, her lips slightly open; her teeth gleamed, her big eyes were looking in my direction; and yet I felt she was not seeing me at all—as if she were smiling past, beyond me into the grey, silver flowing, as if she had been stirred in some ghostly way by the

wind moving in the treetops, by the moist trickle down the trunks; as if she were listening to some dark, inaudible summons behind the trees, behind the world; as if she must rise up at once and go away, through the mist, aimless and sure, and follow it, the dark mysterious call of the earth and of life.

Never will I forget that face—never forget how it then inclined toward me, how it won expression, how it filled silently with tenderness and compassion, with a shining quietness, as if it flowered—never will I forget how her lips came toward mine, how her eyes approached mine, how they stood close in front of me and looked at me, questioning, solemn, big and shining—and then how they slowly closed as if surrendering themselves. . . .

The mist drifted and drifted. The crosses of the gravestones stood pale above the billows, I wrapped my coat about us. The city had completely foundered. Time was dead.

We sat so a long time. Gradually the wind began to blow stronger and shadows loomed through the grey air in front of us. I heard steps crunching and a soft murmuring between. Then the stifled strumming of guitars. I raised my head. The shadows came nearer, turned into dark figures and formed a circle. Quiet. And suddenly loud singing: "Jesus bids you come—"

I sat up with a start and listened. What was it? where were we? On the moon? It was a choir, by Jove—a female, two-part choir!

"Sinner, sinner, arise!" it echoed over the graveyard to the time of a military march.

I stared at Pat. "What do you make of it?" said I.

"'Come to the mercy seat—" it continued at a brisk pace.

At once I realized. *"Lieber Gott!* The Salvation Army!"

"Let not sin unbridled run—" exhorted the shadows anew in a crescendo.

Lights were dancing in Pat's brown eyes. Her lips twitched and her shoulders heaved.

Irresistibly it went on *fortissimo:*—

Burning hell and fiery pain
Are the reward of sin;
Jesus calls—ere 'tis too late
Come, prodigal, repent.

"Dry up, for Christ's sake," suddenly shouted an indignant voice out of the mist.

A moment of startled silence. But the Salvation Army was used to trouble. With renewed vigour the chorus began again.

"What wilt thou in the world alone—" it pleaded in unison.

"Cuddle," bawled the indignant voice again; "can't a man have peace here even?"

"Where Satan's wiles would thee seduce—" came the sudden shrill rejoinder.

"Like to see you old screws seduce me," was the prompt reply out of the mist.

I exploded. And Pat could not contain herself any longer. We shook with laughter at this duel in the graveyard. The Salvation Army was aware that the benches here were the refuge of couples who did not know where else they could go to be alone in all the city's noise. So they had resolved upon a telling blow. They would make a Sunday raid to save souls. Pious, fanatical and loud the unschooled voices shrieked their message, while the guitars strummed out a steady *wumba-wumba.*

The graveyard came to life. Giggles and shouts issued from the mist. Every bench seemed to be occupied. The solitary rebel of love received invisible reinforcements of like-minded men on every hand. A protest choir took shape. There must have been an old soldier among them, whom the march music had excited—for soon arose from powerful lungs the immortal song: "I have been to Hamburg and seen the blooming world."

"Harden your hearts no longer . . ." came through shrilly from the ascetic choir once more, for the Salvation Army with its nodding shovel bonnets was in a state of extreme alarm.

But the wicked triumphed. "My name, I will not tell it,"—from a dozen lusty throats came the ringing counterblast—"for I am a girl off the street. . . ."

"I think we'd better be going now," said I to Pat. "I know that song. It has a lot of verses, each steeper than the last. Come on."

The city was there again with its clamour of horns and roar of wheels. But it still remained enchanted. The mist turned the omnibuses into great fabulous beasts, cars into prowling cats of light, and shop windows into gay

caves of Aladdin.

We went down the street skirting the graveyard and crossed the amusemant park. The roundabouts reached up into the misty air like whirling towers of music, the devil's wheel spouted purple and gold and laughter, and the maze was aglow with blue fire.

"Blessed maze!" said I.

"Why?" asked Pat.

"We were together in there once." .

She nodded.

"It feels an endless long time ago."

"Shall we go again now?"

"No," said I, "not again. Would you like something to drink?"

She shook her head. She looked lovely. The mist was like a faint perfume, that made her still more beautiful.

"Aren't you tired too?" I asked.

"No, not yet."

We came to the booths with the rings and hooks. Carbide lamps with white, sputtering light were hanging in front. Pat looked at me. "No," said I, "I'm not throwing to-day. Not a single ring. Not though all Alexander the Great's schnapps cellar were to be won."

We walked on, across the square and through the municipal park. *"The Daphne indica* must be somewhere about here," said Pat.

"Yes, you can smell it already away across the lawn. Quite distinctly. Or do you think not?"

She looked at me. "Sure," said she.

"It must be in flower. You can smell it all over the city now."

I looked cautiously to right and left to see if there was a seat anywhere vacant. But whether the Daphne indica was to blame or Sunday, or ourselves, I found none. Every one was occupied. I looked at my watch. It was already past twelve.

"Come," said I. "We'll go to my place—there we will be alone."

She did not answer, but we went back. At the graveyard we saw something unexpected. The Salvation Army had called up reinforcements. The choir was now four-deep: not only sisters, but two rows of uniformed brothers as well. The singing sounded no longer two-part and shrill, but four-part like an organ. To waltz time "Jerusalem the Golden" boomed over the gravestones.

Of the opposition not a sound was to be heard. It was swept away. "Perseverance," as my old rector, Hillermann, used to say. "Perseverance and diligence are better than genius and license."

I closed the door. I considered a moment. Then I switched on the light. The tube of the passage yawned yellow and hideous.

"Shut your eyes," said I softly to Pat. "It is a sight only for rested nerves." I picked her up and at my usual stride, as if I were alone, walked slowly past trunks and gas rings to my room.

"Dreadful, eh?" said I sheepishly, staring at the sea of plush that spread itself to greet us. The brocade armchairs, the carpet, the Hasses' lamp, were gone.

"It isn't dreadful at all," said Pat.

"Oh, yes it is," I replied going to the window. "But the view at least is pretty. Let's pull the armchairs to the window."

Pat walked around the room. "'It's not so bad. Above all, it's beautifully warm."

"Are you frozen?"

"I like to be warm," said she. "I can't stand cold and rain."

"Good heavens—and we've been sitting out in the mist all this time—"

"Only makes it so much better to be here now."

She stretched, and again with her beautiful walk made the tour of the room. I was very embarrassed and looked quickly around—thank God, there was not much lying around. My broken house-slippers I sent with a smart back kick flying under the bed.

Pat stopped in front of the wardrobe and looked up. On top lay an old trunk which Lenz had given me. It was plastered all over with coloured labels from his travels. "Rio de Janeiro," she read; "Manaos—Santiago, Buenos Aires—Las Palmas—"

She pushed the trunk back and came toward me. "Have you been all over there?"

I mumbled something. She took my arm, "Come, tell me about it, tell me about all those cities, it must have been grand, to travel so far—"

And I? I saw her before me, beautiful, young, expectant, a butterfly that by a happy accident had flown into my down-at-heels, shabby room, into my insignificant, meaningless life, with me and yet not with me—a breath

merely, and it might rise and fly away again. . . . Blame me, condemn me; I couldn't, I simply could not say No, could not say that I had never been there; not yet. . . .

We were standing by the window, the mist pressed and broke in waves against the panes—and I felt that behind it lurked again the secret, the hidden, the past things, the damp days of horror, the desolation, the filth, the shreds of a waste life, the perplexity, the misguided frittering away of strength in an aimless existence; but here, before me in the shadow, disconcertingly near, the quiet breathing, the unseizable present—warmth, clear living—I must hold it, I must win it.

"Rio—" said I. "Rio de Janeiro—a harbour out of a fairy tale. The sea swings in around the bay in seven sweeps and the city mounts white and shining above it. . . ." I began to tell of the hot cities and endless plains, of the yellow floods of the great rivers, of shimmering islands, of crocodiles, of forests devouring roads, of the cry of the jaguar by night, as the river boat glided through the sultry, vanilla-and-orchid-scented putrefaction of darkness. I had heard it all from Lenz, but now it almost seemed as if it had been I myself, so curiously intermixed were the memory and the desire to lend some glamour to the petty and obscure nothingness of my life, in order not to lose this incredibly lovely face, this sudden hope, this blessed flowering, for which alone I was much too little. Later I could explain it all, later when I should be more, when everything was more secure—later, but not now.

"Manaos," said I. "Buenos Aires . . ." And each word was a plea and a vow.

Night. Outside it began to rain. The drops fell softly and gently. They no longer pattered as they had done a month ago when they encountered only the bare branches of the lime trees—now they rustled lightly down among the young, yielding leaves; they pressed toward them and ran down them, a mystic festival and secret flowing down to the roots, whence they would mount again and themselves become leaves that would again await the coming of the rain in the nights of early spring.

It had become quiet. The noise of the street was silenced; a solitary street lamp flickered on the sidewalk. The young leaves of the trees, lighted from below, looked almost white, almost transparent, and the tops of the trees were shimmering, bright sails. . .

"Listen to the rain, Pat—"

"Yes."

She lay beside me. Her hair stood out dark against the white pillow. Her face appeared very pale below the darkness of the hair. One shoulder was raised, it gleamed from some light or other like chased bronze, and a narrow strip of light fell on her arm also.

"Just look—" said she, and lifted her hands into it too.

"I fancy it comes from the street lamp outside," said I.

She sat up. Now her face also was in light, it ran over her shoulders and breasts, yellow, like the glow of wax tapers, it changed, melted, flowed together, turned to orange; blue circles flitted through it, and then suddenly a warm red stood behind her like a halo, slid higher and wandered slowly over the ceiling of the room.

"It's the cigarette advertisement across the way," said I.

"See now how beautiful your room is," said she.

"It's beautiful because you are here," said I. "It will never be again the room it used to be—because you have been here."

She knelt up in bed, completely bathed in pale blue. "But," said she, "I will often be here now—often."

I lay still and looked at her. I saw everything as in a gentle, clear sleep—relaxed, resolved, calm and very happy.

"How beautiful you are like that, Pat. Much more beautiful than in any clothes."

She smiled and bent down to me. "You must love me, Robby. Very much. I need lots of love. I don't know what I should do without love."

Her eyes held me. Her face was close above me. It was excited, completely frank, full of a passionate strength.

"You must hold me," she whispered, "I need someone to hold me. I shall fall otherwise. I am afraid."

"You don't look afraid," I replied.

"I am though. I only pretend not to be. I am often afraid."

"I will hold you, Pat," said I, still in that unreal waking dream, that hovering clear sleep. "I will hold you right enough, Pat. You will be surprised."

She took my face in her hands. "Really?"

I nodded. Her shoulders shone green as in deep water. With a stifled cry she threw herself upon me, a wave, a shining, breathing soft wave that rose

and extinguished everything.

She slept in my arms. I wakened often and looked at her. I thought the night could never come to an end. We were drifting somewhere the other side of time. It had all come so quickly, I could not realize it. I knew that for a man I could be quite a good comrade; but I could not imagine why a woman should love me. I thought it would probably be only this night, and believed that with waking it would all be over.

The darkness turned to grey. I lay quite still. My arm under Pat's head was asleep, I could not feel it any longer. But I did not stir. Only as she turned over and pressed herself against the pillow was I able to remove it. I got up very softly, cleaned my teeth noiselessly and shaved. I took

also some eau de cologne and rubbed it on my hair and shoulders. It was queer, so soundless in the grey room, with such thoughts, and outside the dark silhouettes of the trees.

As I turned I saw that Pat had opened her eyes and was watching me. I stopped.

"Come," said she.

I went to her and sat down on the bed.

"Is it all still true?" said I.

"Why do you ask?" said she.

"I don't know. Because it is morning, perhaps."

It grew lighter.

"Now you must give me my things," said she.

I took up the thin silk garments from the floor. They were so light and so little. I held them in my hand. Even this much makes all the difference, thought I. One who would wear things like this must be different. I should never comprehend it, never.

I gave her the things. She put her arm around my neck and kissed me. I held her tightly to me. "Pat," said I.

Then took her home. We did not talk much more. We walked side by side through the silvery dawn. Milk carts rattled over the cobbles and newspapers were being delivered. An old fellow was sitting asleep in front of a house. His jaw was chattering as if it would never stop. Cyclists rode past with baskets of bread. The smell of warm new bread filled the street. High above us an aeroplane moved across the blue sky.

"To-day?" I asked Pat outside the house door.

She smiled.

"About seven?" I asked.

She did not look the least tired. She was as fresh as if she had had a long sleep. She kissed me good-bye. I remained standing outside the house until I saw the light come on in her room.

Then I went back. On the way many things occurred to me that I should like to have said to her, many pretty words. I wandered through the streets thinking of all the things I might have said and might have done had I been other than I was. Then I went to the market. The wagons with vegetables, meat and flowers were already there. I knew that I could get three times as many flowers for the same money as in the shops. All the money I had on me I invested in tulips. They looked wonderful, perfectly fresh with drops of water still in their cups. I received a great armful. The seller promised to send them to Pat about eleven o'clock. She laughed at me as she promised it, and put in a fat bunch of violets as well.

"Now the lady will have her friend at least a fortnight," said she. "She has only to put an aspirin in the water now and then."

I gave her the money. Then I walked slowly home.

Chapter X

The Ford was standing finished in the workshop, and no new work had come in. We should have to get busy with something. Köster and I had gone to an auction to buy a taxi that was being sold. Taxis could always be sold again.

The place was a mews in the north of the city. Besides the taxi there was a lot of other stuff to be sold, some of which was standing in the yard: beds, rickety tables, a gilded cage with a parrot that said "Hallo, dearie!", a grandfather clock, some books, cupboards, an old dress suit, kitchen chairs, cooking utensils—all the pitiful equipment of a crumbling, broken life.

We arrived too early; the auctioneer was not there yet.

I was rooting about among the things for sale when I came on some old books—cheap, well-thumbed copies of the Greek and Latin classics with numerous manuscript notes in the margins. In the discoloured, battered pages were to be read no more the verses of Horace, the songs of Anacreon—only the cry of distress and despair of a life that was lost. To their owner, whoever he was, these books had been a haven of refuge; he had kept them to the last — and if he sent them here, it meant his life was finished.

Köster looked over my shoulder. "Pathetic, eh?"

I nodded. "These too, Otto," said I, pointing to the other things. "Kitchen chairs and wardrobes aren't sent here for fun."

We went to the car which was standing in a corner of the yard. The paint was chipped and worn in places, but the car was clean, even under the mudguards. A stocky little man with big, dangling hands was standing near by; he looked at us dully.

"Have you looked over the machine?" I asked Köster.

"Yesterday," said he. "It's a bit worn, but well looked after."

I nodded. "Seems so," said I. "It has been washed down only this morning, Otto. The auctioneer guys didn't do it, that's certain."

Köster shook his head and looked at the stocky figure.

"That'll be the owner. He was here yesterday. I saw him polishing the car."

"Damn it all," said I, "the man looks like a dog that has been run over."

A young man came across the yard towards the car. He was wearing a coat with a belt, and had a disagreeably smart appearance.

"This'll be the bus, I suppose," said he, half to us and half to the other man, tapping the bonnet with his cane. I saw the other man wince. "That's nothing, that's nothing," said the belted one loftily. "The paint's not worth a brass tack. Venerable old crock—ought to be in a museum, what?" He laughed loudly at his joke and looked to us for approval. We were not laughing. He turned to the owner. "What do you want for grandfather?"

The man swallowed hard but said nothing.

"Its price as scrap iron?" bleated the young man in high fettle. He turned to us again: "Are you gentlemen interested?" He lowered his voice: "Let's fix it between us. Buy it for nothing, turn it in again, and split the profits. No point in giving them money. My name, by the way, is Thiess—Guido Thiess of The Augeka."

He twirled his bamboo cane and winked at us knowingly. There are no secrets to this worm, thought I angrily; the silent figure by the car was troubling me.

"You know," said I aloud, "you oughtn't to be called Thiess."

"No?" said he, flattered. He was evidently used to being complimented on his sharpness.

"Yes," I went on. "Twerp, you ought to be called, Guido Twerp."

He started back. "Of course," he remarked at last, "two to one, of course —"

"If that's your trouble," said I, "I'll take you on alone whenever you like."

"Thanks," replied Guido frostily, "thanks very much"— and retired.

The stocky man with the troubled face just stood there staring at the car as if nothing signified any more.

"Let's not buy it, Otto," said I.

"If we don't, then your poodle, Guido, will," replied Köster. "We can't do anything to help the fellow."

"True enough," said I. "But a lot hangs on it—"

"Yes, but what doesn't a lot hang on these days, Bob?

You can be sure of this—it's a damned good thing for the owner we are here. He'll get a bit more for it. But I promise if the poodle doesn't bid, I won't either."

The auctioneer arrived. He was in a hurry; he had a lot to do, apparently. For him there were auctions by the dozen every day. With comprehensive gestures he started selling the pitiful junk. He had the cast-iron humour and matter-of-factness of one who deals daily in misery without ever himself

being touched by it.

The things went for a few pence. Dealers bought most of it. They would lift a finger indolently whenever the auctioneer looked in their direction, or just shake their heads. But from time to time another pair of eyes followed the auctioneer's glance, careworn eyes of a woman, eyes that watched the dealer's finger as if it had been the finger of God, full of hope and fear.

Three people bid for the taxi—first Guido, three hundred marks, a shameful underbid. The stocky man took a step forward. His lips moved, but without sound. For one. moment he looked as if he intended to join in the bidding. But the hand sank. He stepped back.

The next bid was four hundred marks. Guido went to four fifty. Then a pause. The auctioneer called for other bids. "No offers? Going for the first time . . . going for the second time . . ." The man by the taxi was standing with wide eyes and bowed head, waiting for the blow.

"One thousand," said Köster. I looked at him.' "It's worth three," he muttered. "I'm not going to see the chap slaughtered."

Guido was signalling frantically. He had forgotten the insult now it came to business. "Eleven hundred," he bleated, winking at us with both eyes at once. If he had had another one behind, he would have winked that as well.

"Fifteen hundred," said Köster.

"Fifteen hundred and ten," announced Guido perspiringly.

"Eighteen hundred," said Köster.

Guido touched bis forehead and abandoned the struggle. The auctioneer was hopping with excitement. Suddenly I thought of Pat. "Eighteen fifty," said I without quite meaning to do so.

Köster turned his. head in surprise, "I'll make up the fifty," said I hastily. "It's in aid of something—an investment."

He nodded.

The auctioneer knocked the car down to us. Köster paid immediately.

"What did I tell you?" said Guido, coming over as if nothing had happened. "We could have had it for a thousand marks. We bluffed the third chap out pretty soon."

"Hello, dearie!" shrieked a brazen voice behind him— the parrot in the gilded cage.

"Twerp," I added.

Guido shrugged his shoulders and vanished.

I went across to the owner of the car. A pale-faced woman was now

beside him.

"Sorry . . ." said I.

"It's all right," he replied.

"We would sooner not have done it," said I. "But you would only have got less."

He nodded, twisting his hands.

"She's a good car," he burst out suddenly, tumbling over himself. "She's a good car, well worth the money, really she is; you haven't paid too much. It isn't the car so much —not at all. . . . It's . . ."

"I know," said I.

"And we don't get any of the money," said the woman; "it all goes."

"We'll soon come up again, Mother," said the man; "we'll come up again."

The woman did not answer.

"She grinds a bit changing from first to second," said the man, "but it's not a defect. She did that when she was new." He might have been talking of a child. "It's three years we've had her now, and she has never given the least trouble. You see, I was ill and then a bloke let me down —a friend . . ."

"A villain," said the woman with a grim face.

"Now, Mother," said the man and looked at her. "I'll come up again soon, Mother, now won't I?"

The woman did not answer. The man was wet with sweat.

"Give me your address," said Köster; "we may want a driver sometime, you never know."

The man wrote eagerly with his heavy, honest hands. I looked at Köster; we both knew it would need a miracle before we could offer anything. And there are no miracles these days. He would go under most likely.

The man talked and talked like a man in a high fever. The sale was over and we were now alone in the yard. He gave us some tips about starting it in winter. Again and again he kept going to the car. At last he was silent. "Now come, Albert," said the woman.

We shook hands with him, and they went. We waited until they were out of sight, and then started the car.

As we passed down the street we saw a little old woman with a parrot-cage in her arms warding off a group of children. Köster pulled up.

"Like a lift?" he asked her.

"In these days? I've no money to go gadding about in taxis!"

"You don't need any," said Otto. "To-day's my birthday and I am driving for fun."

She held on to her cage suspiciously. "But it will cost something afterwards?"

He reassured her and at last she got in.

"What did you buy the parrot for, Mother?" said I as she was getting out.

"For the nights," said she. "Do you think the food is very expensive?"

"No," said I; "but why for nights?"

"He can talk, you see," she replied, looking at me with clear aged eyes. "Now there will always be someone there who will talk."

"Ach, so," said I.

The baker came during the afternoon to collect his Ford. He looked grey and sour. I was alone in the yard. "Do you like the colour?" I asked.

"So so," said he and looked at it dubiously.

"The upholstery looks well."

"Certainly. . . ."

He still hung around, apparently unable to make up his mind to go. I expected him to try to screw something out of us—a jack, an ash-tray or some such.

But it proved otherwise. He shuffled about for some time, examining this thing and that thing; then he looked at me with his bloodshot eyes and said: "And just think— only a few weeks ago she was sitting there, alive and happy. . . ."

I was surprised to find him suddenly so sentimental, and guessed that the flashy little Jane he had with him last time was already beginning to get on his nerves.

"She was a good wife," he went on; "a jewel, I might say. She never wanted a thing. Ten years she wore the same coat. Blouses and so on she made all herself. And the housework—no maid."

Aha, thought I, the new one doesn't, that's obvious.

He told me how economical his wife had been. It was extraordinary how deeply the memory of money saved affected this skittles addict. She did not even let herself be photographed—cost too much. He had only one picture of the wedding group, and a few snaps.

That gave me an idea. "You ought to get somebody to paint a real slap-up portrait of her," said I. "Then you'd have something for always. Photographs fade in time. There's a painter up here who does that sort of

thing."

I explained to him Ferdinand Grau's activities. He was at once suspicious, and supposed it would be very expensive. I assured him—if I went with him he would get a special price. He tried to escape, but I would not let him go, explaining that if he really were so fond of his wife, it oughtn't to be too much. At last he consented. I called up Ferdinand and primed him for the encounter, then drove with the baker to his house to get the photographs of his wife.

The dark person dashed out of the shop to meet us. She circled round the Ford. "Red would have been nicer, Puppi. But, you would have your own silly way."

"That'll do," said Puppi vexedly.

We went up to the parlour, the dark person following. Her quick eyes were everywhere. The baker was losing his nerve. He did not intend to look for the photographs under those eyes. "Now leave us," said he bluntly, at last.

She pouted. "A pretty gallant you are!"

Defiant, her breasts wagging beneath her tight-fitting jumper, she flounced out of the room. From a green plush album the baker now produced a couple of pictures and showed them to me. His wife as bride, himself beside her, with tilted, waxed moustaches—there she stood, laughing; then another, in which, thin, worn-out with work, with frightened eyes, she sat on the extreme edge of a chair. Two little pictures—one whole life.

Ferdinand Grau received us in a frock coat. He looked grave and dignified. That was part of his trade. He recognised that, for many mourners, respect for their grief was more important than the grief itself.

On the walls of the studio in gilt frames hung several imposing portraits in oil, and beneath them the tiny photographs from which they had been done, so that a customer might see at a glance what could be made of even the most faded snapshot.

Ferdinand showed the baker around, inquiring which style he preferred. The baker in his turn asked if the prices were not according to size. Ferdinand explained that it was not so much a matter of superficial measurement as of treatment. Whereupon the baker at once expressed a preference for the biggest.

"You have very good taste," commented Ferdinand. "That is a portrait of the Princess Borghese. Eight hundred marks. Framed."

The baker's jaw dropped. "And unframed?"

"Seven hundred and twenty."

The baker offered four hundred. Ferdinand shook his lion's head.

"For four hundred marks the most you could have would be a head in profile. Not a half length and full face. It's double the work, you see."

The baker thought that, after all, a profile head would do quite well. Ferninand drew his attention to the fact that both photos were full face. "Not Titian could paint a profile from them," said he. The baker was sweating; he was annoyed he had not foreseen this when the photographs were taken. But he had to admit that Ferdinand was right—full face was one half-face more than profile; a higher price was clearly warranted.

The baker could not bring himself to it. So far Ferdinand had been quite restrained; now he began to persuade. His powerful bass resounded through the big studio. As an expert, I must admit it was a fine piece of work. The baker was soon ripe—expecially when Ferdinand conjured up the disconcerting effect so grand a picture would have on ill-disposed neighbours.

"Very well," said he at last. "But ten per cent, for cash, mind."

"Agreed," replied Ferdinand; "ten per cent off—but an advance for expenses: colours, canvas—three hundred marks."

They argued back and forth for some time, then at last came to terms and began to discuss details of treatment. The baker wanted a pearl necklace and a good brooch with diamonds painted in, as extras. They did not appear in the photographs.

"Of course," explained Ferdinand, "your wife's jewellery shall certainly be painted. It would be better if you could bring it to me here for an hour, so that I can make it as lifelike as possible."

The baker flushed. "I haven't got it now. It is . . . That is, well, her relatives have it."

"Ach, so! Well, it doesn't really matter. Did the brooch look like the one in that picture there, for example?" suggested Ferdinand.

The baker nodded. "Not quite so large."

"Good. Then we'll make it like that. And we don't need the necklace at all. Pearls all look much alike."

The baker breathed again. "And when will the picture be ready?"

"In six weeks."

"Good." The baker took his leave.

Ferdinand and I were alone in the studio.

"Do you really need six weeks for it?" I asked.

"Ach, what do you think? Four, five days, perhaps. But I couldn't tell him that, or he would be calculating what I earn an hour, and figure he was being done. With six weeks he will be satisfied. The same with the Princess Borghese —it's human nature, my dear Bob; if I had told him it was a seamstress, he wouldn't have valued his picture half so much. This is the sixth time that deceased wives have had jewellery like that in the picture there. Extraordinary coincidence, isn't it? It has been a wonderful draw, that picture of old Luise Wolff."

I looked round: pictures that had not been claimed by their owners, or had not been paid for—from immobile faces, eyes long since mouldering in the grave stared down from the wall—all human beings that had once breathed and hoped . . .

"Doesn't this make you sad, Ferdinand?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Cynical, if you like. One is sad when one thinks about life—cynical when one -sees what people make of it."

"Yes, but with some, at any rate, it goes deeper."

"True. But then they don't have pictures painted."

He stood up. "After all, isn't it just as well, Bob, that they should have their bit of fun that is so important to them? It keeps them going, staves off the evil day when they will be alone. And to be alone, really alone, without illusion, that way lies madness—and suicide."

The big bare room was like a vault in the half-twilight. Next door one could hear footsteps coming and going—the housekeeper. She did not show herself when any of us was there; she hated us because she imagined we set Grau against her.

I left. And the busy clamour of the street below was like a warm bath.

Chapter XI

I was on the way to Pat's. It would be the first time I had been to see her. Hitherto she had either been to my place or I had met her outside her house and we had gone somewhere or other. But it was always as if she were merely on a visit. I wanted to know more about her. I wanted to know how she lived.

The park behind the roundabouts was in full flower. I jumped the railing and began plundering a white lilac.

"What are you doing, my man?" suddenly rapped a sharp voipe.

I looked up. A chap with a burgundy red face and white, waxed moustaches was staring at me indignantly. Not a policeman and not a park keeper. A high military gent on the retired list, one saw it immediately.

"That's not very difficult to see," I replied politely. "I'm breaking off lilac sprays."

The chap lost the faculty of speech for a moment. "Don't you know this is a city park?" he then growled excitedly.

I smiled at him amiably. "You don't say! I thought it was the Canary Islands. Where the pretty, yellow long-birds come from, you know."

The chap turned purple. I was afraid he might have a stroke. "Out of there at once, fellow!" he cried in first-rate barracks-square tone. "You are stealing public property. I'll put you under arrest."

I had in the meantime enough lilac. "You catch me, grandfather," I invited the old chap, and then jumped over the railing on the opposite side and disappeared.

Outside Pat's place I looked over my clothes once more. Then, slowly, I mounted the stairs. The house was new and modern—a decided contrast to my jaded and pompous barracks. The staircase had a red carpet—none of that at Mother Zalewski's. Much less a lift.

Pat lived on the second floor. On the door was a self-important tin plate: Egbert von hake, lt. col. Involuntarily I adjusted my tie before ringing the bell.

A girl in white cap and little apron opened—not to be mentioned in the same breath with our cockeyed slut, Frida. I began to feel rather awkward.

"Herr Lohkamp?" she asked.

I nodded.

Without more ado she led me across a little landing and opened a door. I should not have been surprised if Lieutenant Colonel Egbert von Hake had been standing there in full uniform and had subjected me to preliminary cross-examination, so solemn was the effect of the array of portraits of generals, who, covered with decorations, looked down grimly upon me, mere civilian, from the walls of the antechamber. But there was Pat already coming toward me with her lovely, long stride, and the room was suddenly an island of warmth and gaiety. I shut the door and first of all took her cautiously in my arms. Then I handed to her the stolen lilac. "Here," said I, "with the compliments of the town council."

She put the sprays in a large, bright earthenware pot that stood on the floor by the window. As she did so I glanced in surprise around the room. Pleasant, subdued colours; little old, lovely furniture; a soft blue carpet, pastel-tinted curtains, cosy little armchairs upholstered in faded satin . . .

"My God, how did you find such a room, Pat?" said I. "People usually put only their broken furniture and useless birthday presents in rooms they have to let."

She pushed the vase with the flowers carefully back against the wall. I saw her slender, arched neck, the straight shoulders and the arms, a shade too thin. As she knelt she looked like a child, a child one must take care of. But her movements were those of a graceful animal, and then when she stood up and leaned against me, she was no longer a child, her eyes and her lips again had the inquiring expectancy and mystery that so intoxicated me and of which I had believed there was none left in this muddy world.

I put my arm about her shoulders. It was lovely to feel her like this. "They are my own things, Robby," said she. "The house used to belong to my mother. When she died I let it and kept just two rooms for myself."

"Then it belongs to you, does it? And Lieutenant Colonel Egbert von Hake is a tenant?"

She shook her head. "Not now. I couldn't keep it. I had to sell the rest of the furniture and give up the house. I live here *en pension* now. But what have you got against old Egbert?"

"Nothing. I merely have a natural shyness of policemen and staff officers. Comes from my army days."

She laughed. "My father was a major."

"Major is just on the border line," I replied.

"Do you know old Hake, then?" she asked.

I was suddenly seized with an alarming thought. "Is he a little chap, so high, very straight, with a red face, a white moustache, and a big voice? The sort to go walking a lot in the park?"

"Aha!" She glanced at the lilac and then looked at me, smiling. "No, he's a tall, pale-faced chap with horn-rimmed spectacles."

"Then I don't know him."

"Would you like to know him? He's very nice."

"God forbid! For the moment I belong more to the mechanic and Zalewski side."

There was a knock. The maid of a while back pushed in a low trolley. Eggshell porcelain, a silver dish with cakes, another with incredibly tiny sandwiches, serviettes, cigarettes, and God knows what else—dazzled, I surveyed it all. "Mercy, Pat!" said I. "It's just like the films. I'm used to eating out of grease-proof paper off the Zalewski window ledge, remember, the old tommy-cooker beside me. Have mercy on the inhabitant of a loveless pension if in his confusion he smashes an odd cup or two."

She laughed. "You won't do that. Your professional honour as a motor mechanic forbids it. You must be clever with your fingers." She reached for the handle' of a jug. "Tea or coffee, Bob?"

"Tea or coffee? Are there both then?"

"Yes. Look."

"Grand. Like the best palaces! All it wants now is music."

She leaned over and switched on a little portable radio which I had not noticed before. "So—now what will you have, tea or coffee?"

"Coffee, plain coffee, Pat. I'm homely. And you?"

"I'll have coffee with you."

"But otherwise you take tea?"

"Yes."

"Then we'll have that."

"I'll start now and get used to coffee. Will you have cakes with it or sandwiches?"

"Both, Pat. One must make the best of one's opportunities. I'll have some tea after, too. I must sample everything you have." She laughed and loaded up my plate. "Enough, enough! Remember we are in the neighbourhood of a lieutenant colonel. The army likes moderation in the lower ranks."

"Only in drinking, Bob. Old Egbert himself is terribly fond of meringues."

"Really," I replied. "They weaned us of them pretty thoroughly in those days." I pushed the table to and fro on its rubber wheels. It invited it. Noiselessly it rolled over the carpet. I looked around. Everything went with everything else. "Yes, Pat," said I, "this is how our ancestors lived."

She laughed. "What nonsense are you talking now?"

"It's not nonsense. It's a sign of the times."

"But it's merely an accident I have a few things, Robby."

I shook my head. "It's not an accident. And it's not the things either. It's what lies behind them. You don't see it. Only a person who no longer belongs to it, sees it."

She looked at me. "You could have them just the same, if you really wanted."

I took her hand. "But I don't want, Pat, that is it. I'd feel a high-flyer. The likes of us have to be ready to move on any miniite. We're used to it. It belongs to the time."

"It's a very convenient way, Bob," said Pat.

I laughed. "Maybe. And now give me some tea. I'd just like to try it."

"No," said she, "we'll stick to coffee. But eat something more in case you have to move on."

"True. But what about Egbert—if he's so fond of cakes, won't he be counting on some to come back to?"

"Maybe. But he must count on the lower ranks taking their revenge. That belongs to the time, too. Eat it all."

Her eyes were shining and she looked wonderful. "Do you know one thing I'm not discarding next time I have to move on?"

She did not answer, but she looked at me.

"You," said I. "And now to be avenged on Egbert."

I had had only a plate of soup at the cab shelter for lunch, so it was not difficult to eat up everything there was.

And egged on by Pat I finished off the entire jug of coffee as well.

We sat by the window and smoked. The evening showed red over the roofs. "It's nice here, Pat," said I. "I can well imagine one might not want to go out for weeks together— until one had quite forgotten the whole rotten

business outside there."

She smiled. "There was a time when I thought I never should come out of here again."

"How was that?"

"I was sick."

"That's another matter. What was the matter?"

"Nothing much. But I had to stay in bed. I suppose I grew too fast and got too little to eat. During the war and after the war there wasn't much to be had, of course."

I nodded. "How long were you in bed, then?"

She hesitated a moment. "About a year."

"But that's a long time." I looked at her attentively.

"It's past now, long since. But then it seemed to me a lifetime. Do you remember in 'The Bar' once you told me about Valentin? How after the war he couid never forget what a pleasure it was to be alive? And how nothing else mattered to him besides?"

"You have a good memory," said I.

"Because I understood it so well. Ever since that time I've been just as easily pleased. I'm afraid I'm very superficial, Robby."

"Only people who think they're not superficial, are."

"But I am, definitely. I've not much interest in the important things of life. Only in the beautiful things. Just this lilac here makes me happy."

"That's not superficiality—that's ultimate philosophy. The end of all wisdom, Pat."

"Not in my case. I am superficial and frivolous."

"So am I."

"Not as I am. You said something just now about highflying. I am a real high-flyer."

"That's what I thought," said I.

"Yes. I determined I would live, awhile at any rate, as I liked. No matter if it was sensible or not. And I did."

I laughed. "Why look so defiant about it?"

"Because everybody said it was utterly irresponsible—I ought to save my little bit of money and get work and a position. But I was determined I would be carefree and gay and do what I wanted and not pinch and scrape. That was after my mother died and I had been so long in bed."

"Have you any brothers or sisters?" I asked.

She shook her head.

"I couldn't imagine it," I replied.

"Do you think it was irresponsible, too?"

"No, courageous."

"Ach, courage—I'm not courageous. I was frightened enough sometimes. Like somebody in the wrong seat at the theatre, who yet doesn't get out of it."

"Then you were courageous," said I. "A man is courageous only when he is also afraid. And it was sensible too. You'would only have lost your money otherwise. You did at least get something out of it. But what did you do?"

"Nothing really. Just live for myself."

"All honour! That's the rarest of all."

She smiled. "But it will soon be over. I've got to start something now."

"Oh. What? Had your business interview" with Binding ' anything to do with that?"

She nodded. "With Binding and Doctor Max Matuscheit, director of the Electrola Gramophone shop."

"Well," said I, "Binding might have thought of something better, surely."

"He did," she replied; "but I wasn't having any."

"I'd advise him not to, too. When do you start, then?"

"The first of August."

"Well, that doesn't leave us much time. Perhaps we could find something else, though. In any case you can be sure of our custom."

"Have you a gramophone, then?"

"No, but I'll get one at once. All the same I don't like the business much."

"I don't mind," said she. "It's all much simpler for me .since you are here. But I shouldn't have told you anything about it."

"You should. You must always tell me everything."

She looked at me a moment. "Good, Robby," said she. Then she stood up and went to a little cupboard. "What do you think I have here? Rum for you. Good rum, I believe."

She put a glass on the table and looked at me expectantly.

"The rum is good all right, I can smell it already from afar," said I. "But really, Pat—don't you think you ought to save a bit now, rather? To postpone the gramophones?"

"No," she replied.

"Right again," said I.

The rum, as I could see from the colour, was broken-down. The

salesman had lied to Pat, evidently. I drank the glass.

"First rate," said I, "give me another. Where did you get it?"

"From the shop at the corner."

Aha, thought I: another damned pastry shop, of course. I resolved to look in there and tell the fellow off.

"Well, I suppose! ought to go now, Pat, eh?" I asked.

She looked at me. "Not straight away—"

We were standing by the window. The lights flicked up from below.

"Show me your bedroom, will you?" said I.

She opened the door and switched on the light. I stood at the door and looked in. All sorts of things passed through my head.

"So that's your bed, Pat," said I at last.

She smiled. "Whose else should it be, Robby?"

"True." I glanced up. "What absurd things one says. I meant: so that's where you sleep. And there's the telephone. Now I know that too. Now I'll go. Good-bye, Pat."

She put her. hands to my cheeks. It would be marvellous to stay there now in the gathering darkness, close side by side under the soft blue cover in the bedroom—but there was something stopped me; it was no inhibition, nor fear, nor yet prudence—it was simply a very great tenderness that overwhelmed desire.

"Good-bye, Pat," said I. "It has been lovely here. Lovelier for me than you can perhaps imagine. As for the rum —that you should have thought of it —"

"But that was nothing."

"For me it was. I'm not used to such things, Pat."

The Zalewski joint. I sat around awhile. I did not like Pat's being indebted to Binding for anything. Finally I went across the passage to Erna Bönig.

"A business call, Erna," said I. "Tell me, how are things in the female labour market?"

"Come," replied Erna, "there's a blunt question out of a hard heart I Rotten, if you want to know."

"Nothing doing?"

"What line?"

"Secretary, assistant—"

She shook her head. "Hundreds of thousands' without a job. Can the lady do anything particular?"

"She looks marvellous," said I.

"How many words?" asked Erna.

"What?"

"How many words can she write a minute? In how many languages?"

"No idea," said I; "but, Erna, the personal touch, you know—"

"My dear boy," replied Erna, "I know all about it— lady of good family, seen better days, compelled, and so on. Hopeless, I tell you. The only chance is if someone has a special interest and pushes her in somewhere. You know why, of course. But you won't be wanting that, I presume?"

"Funny question," said I.

"Not so funny as you think," replied Erna somewhat-bitterly. "I know cases." I thought of the business with her own boss. "But let me give you a bit of advice," she went on. "Get busy yourself and earn enough for two. That's the simplest solution. Get married."

"Come off the grass," said I, laughing. "I'm not so sure of myself as all that."

Erna gave me a queer look. Suddenly all the life seemed to go out of her and she appeared old and almost withered. "I'll tell you something," said she. "I live pretty well and have all kinds of things I don't need. But believe me—if a man were to come to me and propose that we should live together, properly, decently, I'd leave all this junk and go with him into,an attic if need be." Her face regained its former expression. "But wipe that out—everybody has some sentimental corner." She winked at me through her cigarette smoke. "Even you, apparently?"

"Ach, well—" said I.

"Now, now," warned Erna. "You fall for it easiest when you are least expecting—"

"Not me," I replied.

I stuck in my room until eight o'clock—then I had had enough of sitting around and went to "The Bar" to meet someone to talk to."

Valentin was there. "Sit down," said he, "what will you drink?"

"Rum," I replied. "I've taken rather a fancy to rum since this afternoon."

"Rum is the soldier's milk," said Valentin. "But you are looking very well, Bob."

"Yes?"

"Yes, younger."

"Stuff," said I. *"Pros't,* Valentin."

"Pros't, Bob."

We put the glasses on the table and looked at one another. Then we both burst out laughing.

"Old boy," said Valentin.

"Damned old soak," I replied. "What shall we drink now?"

"Same again."

"Right."

Fred filled the glasses. ;

"Well, *pros't,* Valentin." ;

"*Pros't,* Bob."

"Wonderful word, *'pros't,'* eh?"

"Word of all words."

We said it several times more. Then Valentin left.

I continued to sit. Apart from Fred nobody was there. I looked at the old, lighted maps, the ships with their yellowing sails, and thought of Pat. I should have liked to ring her up, but I forced myself not to. I did not want to think so much about her. I wanted to take her as an unexpected, delightful gift, that had come and would go again—nothing more. I meant not to give room to the thought that it could ever be more. I knew too well that all love has the desire for eternity and that therein lies its eternal torment. Nothing lasts. Nothing.

"Give us another glass, Fred," said I.

A man and a woman came in. They had a cobbler at the bar. The woman looked tired, the man lustful. They left again soon.

I emptied the glass. Perhaps it would have been better if I had not gone to see Pat this afternoon. I would never be free again of that picture—the twilit room, the soft, blue evening shadows, and the beautiful, curled-up figure of the girl talking in her deep, husky voice about her life and her desire for life. Damn it, I'm getting sentimental. What had been till now a breathless, surprising adventure was melting into the mists of affection; had it not already laid firmer hold on me than I knew or cared for; hadn't I discovered only to-day how much I had changed? Why had I gone away? why did I not stay with her as I had meant to? *Ach,* damn, I would think no more about it, one way or the other. Let come what may—I suppose I should go mad if I lost her—but she was there, she was there now—what else mattered? To hell with it. What

was the use trying to make safe and sure our little life? Sooner or later the great wave must come and sweep all away.

"What about a drink with me, Fred?" I asked.

"Sure," said he.

We had two absinths. Then we tossed for two more. I won. That didn't seem to me right. So we went on tossing. But it was five times before I lost. Then I did so three times in succession. . . .

"Am I drunk or is it thundering outside?" I asked.

Fred listened. "It's thunder all right. The first storm this year."

We went to the door and looked at the sky. There was nothing to be seen. It was merely warm, with now and then a roll of thunder. "We'd better have one on the strength of it," I suggested. Fred was all for it.

"Damned liquorice water," said I putting down the empty glass again on the bar. Fred also thought we might now try something with a bit more kick in it. He suggested cherry brandy—I was for rum. In order not to quarrel we drank both by turns. That Fred should not have to work so hard pouring out, we took larger glasses. We were now in fine fettle. Off and on we would go out to see if there wasn't lightning as well. We should have liked very much to see some lightning, but we had no luck. It would flash the moment we were inside again. Fred told me about his girl, whose father owned a Caféteria. But he wasn't marrying till the old man was dead and he was quite sure that she would get the restaurant as well. I thought he was a bit overcautious, but he argued that the old man was such an untrustworthy old blighter, he was quite capable of making over the restaurant, at the last minute, to the Methodist Church. At that I yielded my point. For the rest Fred was fairly hopeful. The old chap had caught cold and Fred was of opinion it might prove to be influenza, which was pretty dangerous at his age. I felt obliged to say that unfortunately influenza meant nothing at all to alcoholics, quite the contrary, an old soak might be on his last legs and get influenza and thrive on it and put on weight even. Fred thought it did not signify, in that case he might get run over by a bus. I agreed that that was more than likely, especially on wet asphalt. Fred thereupon went out to see if it were raining yet. But it was still dry. Only the thunder was a bit louder. I gave him a glass of lemon juice to drink and went to the telephone. At the last moment I remembered that I did not want to telephone. I waved my hand at the instrument and made to raise my hat. But then I observed that I hadn't it on.

When I returned Köster and Lenz were there. "Breathe on me," said

Gottfried.

I breathed. "Rum, cherry-brandy and absinth," said he. "Absinth, you dirty pig."

"If you mean to suggest I'm drunk, you are mistaken," said I. "Where have you come from?"

"A political meeting. But it was too silly for Otto. What's that Fred's drinking?"

"Lemon juice."

"You'd better have a glass too," said he.

"To-morrow," I replied. "I'm going to have something to eat now."

Köster had been looking at me anxiously. "Don't look at me like that, Otto," said I. "I've only got a little bit tight out of pure *joie de vivre.* Not from worry."

"Then it's O.K.," said he. "But come and have something to eat all the same."

By eleven o'clock I was as sober as a bone again. Köster suggested we should have a look at Fred. We went in and found him lying behind the bar counter as if he were dead.

"Take him next door," said Lenz. "I'll do the serving here in the meantime."

Köster and I brought Fred round again. We gave him some warm milk to drink. The effect was instantaneous. Then we sat him on a chair and told him to have a rest for half an hour, Lenz would see to everything outside.

Gottfried did see to it too. He knew all the prices and the whole gamut of cocktails. He swung the mixer as if he had never done anything else.

After an hour Fred was back again. He had a cast-iron stomach and recovered quickly.

"Sorry, Fred," said I, "we ought to have had something to eat first."

"I'm in order again," he replied. "Does you good once in a while."

"No doubt about that." I went to the telephone and rang up Pat. All I had been thinking was suddenly of complete indifference to me. She answered. "I'll be at the front door in a quarter of an hour," I called and hung up quickly. I was afraid she might be tired and refuse to hear of it. I wanted to see her.

She did come. As she opened the front door I kissed the glass where her head was. She was about to say something but I did not give her the chance. I

gave her a kiss and together we ran down the street till we found a taxi. It was thundering and there were flashes of lightning. "Quick, before it rains," I called.

We got in. The first drops pattered on the roof of the cab. The car bounced over the uneven cobbles. It was grand, for with each jolt I felt Pat beside me. Everything was grand, the rain, the city, the drink, everything wide and splendid. I was in that clear, overwakeful state that follows being drunk and having got the better of it again. The inhibitions were gone, the night was charged with a deep power and full of splendour, nothing could happen now, nothing false any more.

The rain began as we got out. While I was paying, the pavement was still spotted dark with drops, like a panther —but before I reached the door it was black and spouting silver, the water poured down so.

I did not make a light. The flashes lit up the room. The storm was over the middle of the town. Peal rolled upon peal. "We could shout here now, for once," I called to Pat, "without fear of anyone hearing."

The windows flamed. For an instant the black silhouettes of the trees in the graveyard sprang out against the blue-white sky and were at once felled again with a crash by the night—for an instant between dark and dark Pat's supple figure stood phosphorescent against the windowpanes—I put my arm around her shoulders, she pressed against me, I felt her lips, her breathing, I thought no more.

Chapter XII

Our workshop stood empty as a barn before harvest. So we had decided not to sell again the taxi we had bought, but to drive it ourselves for a while. Lenz and I were going to take it by turns. Köster and Jupp could look after the workshop quite well alone, until work came again.

I stuffed my pockets with change, took my papers, and cruised slowly along the streets to look out a good stand for myself. This felt a bit queer the first time. Any fool could stop me and give me orders. Not a specially grand feeling. Slipped down a bit once more. I don't quite know why I should have made more of it this time than before. Still, perhaps it wasn't forever—and anyway a sight better than in an office, letting yourself be bullied by some liverish head clerk until you seized the ledger and flung it at him and got the sack.

I selected a place where there were only five cars standing. It was opposite the Waldecker Hof Hotel in the centre of the business quarter. There one might hope for quick business.

I turned off the engine and got out. From one of the front cars a big fellow in a leather coat came toward me. "Clear out of this," he growled.

I looked at him calmly and calculated that it had better be an uppercut if necessary. His coat would prevent him getting his mitts up quickly enough.

"You've no cap?" he persisted, spitting the butt of his cigarette at my feet. "You'd better clear out. Enough here. Don't want any more."

He was annoyed at the addition, that was clear; but it was my right to stand here if I would.

"I don't mind standing a few rounds' entrance," said I.

That would have ended the matter as far as I was concerned. It was the usual way when one came new.

A young driver came up. "All right, mate. Let him alone, Gustav—"

But there was something Gustav did not like about me. I knew what it was. He sensed that I was fresh on the job.

"I'll count up to three—" he announced. He was a head taller than I and was counting on it.

I saw it was not much use talking. Either I must go, or fight. It was too pointed. "One," counted Gustav, unbuttoning his coat.

"Don't be silly," said I, trying once more. "Wouldn't you sooner feel a whisky sizzling in your throat?"

"Two—" growled Gustav.

I saw he meant to slaughter me properly.

"And one is—" He pushed his cap back on his head.

"Shut your mouth, fool!" I snapped suddenly. Gustav opened his mouth in astonishment and came a step nearer. Exactly where I wanted to have him. I let fly at once—a blow like a hammer, with the whole weight of my body behind it. Köster had taught it to me. I was not much of a boxer; I considered it unnecessary—it was usually a matter of the first blow. This was a good one.

Gustav dropped in his tracks. "Won't do him any harm," said the young driver. "He's always spoiling for it." We put him back on the box of his cab. "He'll come round shortly."

I was a bit perturbed, for I had put my thumb out with the blow. When Gustav waked up he would be able to do what he liked with me. I told the young fellow and asked if I had not better hop it. "Nonsense," said he, "the thing is settled. Come over into the pub and stand your entrance fee. You're not a trained cabman, eh?"

"No."

"Neither am I. I'm an actor."

"And you make a go of it?"

"One lives," he replied laughing, "and it's not altogether unlike a play."

There were five of us, two older and three younger. After a while Gustav also put in an appearance. He looked, glared across at our table, and came over. With my left hand I gripped the bunch of keys in my pocket and resolved to defend myself till I could not move any more.

But it did not come to that. Gustav kicked a chair up and dropped into it ill-humouredly. The host put a glass in front of him. The beer came. Gustav tipped it down. A second round was called.

Gustav looked at me askance. He raised his glass. *"Pros't,"* said he to me, but with a face like mud.

"*Pros't,*" I replied and touched glasses.

Gustav produced a packet of cigarettes. He proffered it to me, without looking at me. I took one and gave him a light. Then I ordered a round of double kiimmel. We drank them. Again Gustav gave me a sidelong glance.

"Blighter," said he, but the tone was right.

"Fathead," I replied in like manner.

He turned and faced me. "It was a good punch."

"Fluke," said I and showed him my thumb.

"Bad luck," he replied with a grin. "Gustav's my name, by the way."

"Robert, mine."

"Good. Then O.K., Robert, eh? Thought you'd just left your mother's apronstring."

"O.K., Gustav."

From that time on we were friends.

The cabs moved slowly forward. The actor, who was called Tommy, got a topping fare to the station; Gustav one to the nearest restaurant for thirty pfenning. He almost exploded with wrath, for he must now, for a profit of ten pfennig, take his place again at the end of the line. I landed something quite special—an old Englishwoman wanting to look over the town. I was under way with her almost an hour. On the return journey I picked up several smaller runs. By noon when we assembled again at the pub and were eating our rolls and butter, I already felt like an old hand. There was something of the camaraderie of the Army about it. Men of every conceivable calling were there. At most about half had done it always, the rest had just fallen into it one way or another.

Fairly pleased with myself I drove into the yard of our workshop during the afternoon. Lenz and Köster were waiting for me.

"How much have you made, brothers?" I asked.

"Seventy litres of petrol," reported Jupp.

"Is that all?"

Lenz looked desperately at the sky. "For a drop of rain! And then a little collision on the skiddy asphalt right in front of the door! No one injured, of course. Just a nice, fat little repair job."

"Take a look at this." I showed thirty-five marks in the palm of my hand.

"Magnificent," said Köster. "That's twenty marks' profit.

We'll blow them at once. Must celebrate the maiden voyage."

"We're going to have a bowl of woodruff-wine," announced Lenz.

"Bowl?" I asked. "What do you mean, bowl?"

"Well. Pat's coming."

"Pat?"

"Don't open your trap so wide," said the last of the romantics. "We fixed

it long ago. We collect her at seven. She knows all about it. If you can't think of these things, then we must help ourselves. After all it was through us you came to know her."

"Otto," said I, "did you ever see anything to beat this recruit for insolence?"

Köster laughed. "What's wrong with your hand, Bob? You seem to be holding it a bit queer."

"Dislocated, I think." I recounted the story of Gustav. Lenz looked at it. "Quite. But, in spite of your rudeness, as a Christian and retired student of medicine I'll massage it for you. Come along, Mister Boxer."

We went into the workshop and Gottfried got busy with my hand with some oil. "Did you tell Pat we were celebrating our first-day jubilee as taxidrivers?" I asked him.

Gottfried whistled. "Is that biting you already, lad?"

"Hold your tongue," I replied. Because he was right probably. "Did you tell her?"

"Love," announced Gottfried imperturbably, "is a beautiful thing. But it spoils character."

"Solitude, on the other hand, makes one tactless."

"Tact is a tacit agreement to ignore mutual failings instead of ridding yourself of them. That is to say a despicable compromise. No self-respecting German veteran would stoop to it, baby."

"What would you do then, in my place," said I, "if someone signalled you for a taxi-ride and then you saw it was Pat?"

He smiled. "I wouldn't ask her for her fare, anyway, my boy."

I gave him a dig that knocked him off his three-legged stool. "You grasshopper. Do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to collect her to-night in the taxi."

"Excellent." Gottfried raised a hand in blessing. "Only whatever you do, don't lose your freedom. It is more precious than love and you only find out afterwards. You are not getting the taxi all the same. We want it for Ferdinand Grau and Valentin. It's going to be a solemn, but great evening."

We were sitting in the garden of a small inn on the outskirts of the city. The wet moon hung like a red torch low over the forest. The flowery candelabra of the chestnut trees shimmered pale, the scent of the lilac was like

a drug, and on the table before us the big glass bowl with the wine smelling of woodruff looked in the dim light like a bright opal wherein was gathered up blue and mother-of-pearl, the last glow of evening. Already we had refilled it four times.

Ferdinand was in the chair. Beside him sat Pat. She was wearing a pale pink orchid which he had brdught for her.

Ferdinand fished a lace-wing out of his wine and wiped it carefully on the table.

"Look at that now," said "he: "this fly. Gossamer is a floorcloth to it. And they live one day, and then it's over." He surveyed us all. "Do you know what is the most uncanny thing in the world, brothers?"

"An empty glass," replied Lenz.

Ferdinand obliterated him with a gesture. "The most degrading thing in the world for a man, Gottfried, is to be a joker." He turned to us again. "The most uncanny thing in the world, brothers, is time. Time. The monument through which we live and yet do not possess." He pulled a watch from his pocket and held it in front of Lenz's eyes. "This here, you up-in-the-air romantic. This infernal machine, that ticks and ticks, that goes on ticking and that nothing can stop ticking. You can stay an avalanche, a landslide—but not this."

"I don't want to," declared Lenz. "I want to grow peacefully old. And anyway, I like change."

"It cannot abide man," said Grau ignoring him. "Neither can man abide it. So he has concocted a dream for himself. The old, pathetic, hopeless human dream, eternity."

Gottfried laughed. "The worst disease in the world, Ferdinand, is thought. It's incurable."

"If it were the only one, you'd be immortal," replied Grau. "You parcel of carbohydrates, calcium, phosphorus and a little iron, for a moment of time on the earth, Gottfried Lenz!"

Gottfried beamed complacently. Ferdinand shook his lion head. "Life is a disease, brothers, and death begins already at birth. Every breath, every heartbeat, is a moment of dying—a little shove toward the end."

"Every gulp, too," replied Lenz. *"Pros't,* Ferdinand. Death can be damned pleasant sometimes."

Grau raised his glass. A smile passed over his big face like a soundless storm. *"Pros't,* Gottfried, you waterskipper on the running surface of time.

What were the powers that move us thinking of when they made you, I wonder."

"They must settle that among themselves," said Gottfried. "In any case it's not for you to speak disparagingly of such things. If human beings were immortal, you'd be out of work, you old parasite on death."

Grau's shoulders began to heave. He laughed. Then he turned to Pat. "What do you say, little flower on the dancing waters?"

Later Pat and I were walking alone in the garden. The moon was higher and the meadows swimming in silver grey. The shadows of the trees lay long and black across them like dark signposts into the unknown. We went down as far as the lake and then turned back again. En route we met Gottfried who had taken a garden chair and planted it in the midst of a thicket of lilac bushes. There he was now sitting, only his yellow head and his cigarette visible. Beside him on the ground he had a glass and what remained of the May bowl of hock flavoured with woodruff.

"There's a place, if you like!" said Pat. "Among the lilacs."

"It's tolerable." Gottfried stood up. "Try it."

Pat sat on the chair. Her face shone among the blossoms.

"I'm crazy about lilac," said the last of the romantics. "Homesickness for me means lilac. In the spring of twenty-four I set off hell-for-leather from Rio de Janeiro, only because I remembered the lilac must be in flower here. When I arrived, of course, it was too late."He laughed. "It's always so."

"Rio de Janeiro." Pat drew a spray of blossom down toward her. "Were you there together?"

Gottfried jibbed. I felt a sudden cold shiver down my spine.

"Just look at the moon," said I swiftly, at the same time treading imploringly on Lenz's foot.

In the glow of his cigarette I saw a faint smile and a twinkle. I was saved. "No, we weren't together. I was alone that time. But what do you say to a last swig of this woodruff mixture?"

"No more." Pat shook her head. "I can't drink a lot of wine."

We heard Ferdinand calling to us and went across. But I resolved sometime to clear up the matter of Brazil. Gottfried was right—love does spoil character.

Ferdinand was standing massive in the doorway. "Come inside, children," said he. "People like us have no business with nature at nighttime. She wants to be alone then. A farmer or a fisherman, that's a different matter

—but not us town-dwellers with our instincts sabred off." He laid a hand on Gottfried's shoulder. "Night is nature's protest against the leprosy of civilization, Gottfried. No decent man can withstand it for long. He begins to notice that he has been turned out of the silent company of the trees, the animals, the stars, and unconscious life." He smiled his queer smile; one could never be sure if it were sad or not. "Come inside, children. Let's warm our hands over memories. *Ach*, the wonderful time, when we were horsetails and mudfish—fifty, sixty thousand years ago—God, but how low we have fallen since then."

He took Pat by the hand. "If we had not just this tiny sense of beauty—then all were lost." With a delicate movement of his enormous flippers he placed her hand on his arm. "Silver shooting-star above the giddy abyss—will you have a drink with an age-old man?"

Pat nodded. "Yes," said she. "Anything you like."

The two went in. Walking thus side by side it looked as if Pat were Ferdinand's daughter—the slim, bold and young daughter of a weary giant left over from prehistoric time.

About eleven we drove back. Valentin and Ferdinand had the taxi, Valentin at the wheel. The rest of us went in Karl. The night was warm and Köster made a detour through several villages that lay asleep by the roadside, with no sign of life but a few lights and a dog barking. Lenz was sitting in front with Otto,"singing; Pat and I crouched low behind.

Köster drove wonderfully. He took the curves like a bird; it looked child's play it was so sure. He was not a hard driver like so many racers. You might have slept round hairpin bends, he held the car so steady; one was never conscious of the speed.

We listened to the changing sound of the tyres as the road surface altered. On tarred roads they whistled, over stone thundered hollow. The searchlights coursed ahead like elongated greyhounds and there started up out of the darkness now a trembling avenue of birches, a row of poplars, fleeting telegraph poles, squatting houses and the mute parade of the forest's edge. Immense above us, with its millions of stars, trailed the bright mist of the Milky Way.

The speed increased. I put our coats over Pat. She smiled at me.

"Do you love me really?" I asked.

She shook her head. "Do you me?"

"No. Lucky, isn't-it?"

"Very."

"Then nothing can happen to us, eh?"

"Nothing," she replied and felt for my hand under the coats.

The road ran in a big sweep beside the railway line. The rails gleamed. Away in front of us a red light wavered. Karl bayed and shot away. It was an express with sleeping cars and one brightly lit dining car. Gradually we drew up level with it. From the windows people waved. We did not wave back. We drove past. I looked round. The locomotive was spouting smoke and sparks. It pounded along, black through the blue night. We had overtaken it—but we were driving to the city, to taxis, repair-shops, and furnished rooms; while it would keep steadily on past forests, fields and rivers to the adventure of distant and more spacious lands.

Streets and houses came toward us. Karl became gentler, but his roaring was still that of a wild creature. Köster drove neither to Pat's nor to my place, but stopped near the graveyard in the neighbourhood of both, thinking apparently that we wanted to be alone. We got out. The other two whirled off at once, without looking round. I glanced after them. It felt queer for a moment, that they, my mates, should drive off and I remain behind.

I dismissed the thought. "Come on," said I to Pat, who was watching me as if she had sensed something.

"Go with them," said she.

"No," I replied.

"You would like to have gone with them, though—"

"Ach, why—" said I, knowing it to be true. "Come."

We walked past the graveyard; we were still a bit rocky from the wind and the driving.

"Bob," said Pat, "I think I'd rather go home."

"Why?"

"I don't want you to give up anything on my account."

"What are you talking about?" said I. "What am I giving up?"

"Your friends—"

"I'm not giving them up at all. I'll see them again first thing in the morning."

"You know what I mean, though," said she. "You used to be with them much more before."

"Because you weren't there," I replied and opened the door.

She shook her head. "That's different."

"Of course it's different, thank God."

I picked her up and carried her along the corridor to my room.

"You need comrades," said she close to my face.

"I need you too," I replied.

"But not so much."

"We'll see about that."

I bumped the door open and let her slip to the ground. She clung to me. "I'm only a very poor comrade, Robby."

"Let's hope so," said I. "Anyway I don't want a woman as a comrade. I want a lover."

"I'm not that either," she murmured.

"What are you then?"

"Only half, nothing whole. A fragment—"

"That is best of all," said I. "That stirs the imagination. Such women one loves forever. Perfect women one soon gets over. Worthy ones likewise. Lovely fragments never."

It was four in the morning. I had taken Pat home and was on my way back. The sky was already growing bright. There was a smell of morning.

I was walking along by the cemetery, past the Café International, toward home, when the door of a taximen's pub next the Trades Hall opened and a girl came out. A little toque, a short, shabby, red coat, high, patent-leather boots—I was almost by when I recognised her—"Lisa!"

"So there you are again!" said she.

"Where have you come from then?" I asked.

She made a movement. "I've been waiting there awhile. Thought you'd probably be passing. This is around your time for coming home, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's right."

"Coming along?" she asked.

I hesitated. "I can't really."

"You don't need any money," she said hastily.

"It's not that," I answered thoughtlessly. "I have money."

"Ach so," said she bitterly, stepping back a pace.

I took her hand. "No, Lisa."

Slim and pale she stood in the empty, grey street. It was so I had met her years ago, when I had been living brutish and alone, without care and without hope. She had been mistrustful at first, like all these girls; but then, after we had talked together. several times, quite pathetically confiding and devoted. It had been a curious relationship— sometimes I would not see her for weeks on end, and then suddenly she would be standing somewhere waiting. We had neither of us anybody or anything at that time—so what little bit of warmth and companionship we could give one another had probably meant more to us than it would have otherwise. I had not seen her for a long time since I had known Pat, not at all.

"Where have you been all this while, Lisa?"

She gave a shrug. "What's it, matter? I just wanted to see you again. Well, I suppose I can push off, of course."

"How are things going, then?"

"Don't worry," said she. "Don't put yourself out."

Her lips were quivering. She looked half-starved.

"I'll come along with you for a bit," said I.

Her poor, apathetic, pros'titute's face brightened and became almost childlike. On the way, at one of the cabmen's shelters that are open all night, I bought a feW small things so that she should have something to eat. She was unwilling at first and only agreed when I explained that I was hungry myself. But she saw to it that I was not cheated and given inferior stuff. She was opposed to the half-pound of bacon; she said a quarter would be plenty if we took a couple of small frankfurters as well. But I stood out for the half, and two tins of sausages.

She lived in an attic room which she had furnished herself. An oil lamp was on the table, and beside the bed in a bottle a candle. On the walls hung pictures cut out of newspapers and fastened with drawing-pins. On the chest of drawers lay a few detective novels; alongside a packet of dirty photographs. Her visitors, especially married ones, liked to look at them sometimes. Lisa swept them into a drawer, and took out a threadbare but clean tablecloth.

I unpacked the things. In the meantime Lisa undressed. First she took off her dress, though I knew very well her boots were hurting her most; she had so much walking to do. There she stood in her high patent-leather boots to her knees and her black underwear.

"What do you think of my legs?" she asked.

"First class, as ever."

She was satisfied and now sat down on the bed with a sigh of relief to unlace her boots. "A hundred and twenty marks they cost," said she, holding them up to me. "And before you've earned it they're through again."

She took a kimono from the cupboard and a pair of faded brocade slippers from better days. As she did so she smiled almost guiltily. She did want to please. I had a sudden choking feeling, up here in the little room, as if someone belonging to me had died.

We ate and I talked warily with her. But she perceived, for all that, that something had changed. Her eyes became fearful. There had never been any more between us than chance had brought. But perhaps that makes a greater indebtedness and binds closer than much else.

"Are you going?" she asked as I stood up—as if she had .already been fearing it.

"I have an appointment."

She looked at me. "So late?"

"Business. Important for me, Lisa. Someone I must try to see still. At the Astoria usually around this time."

No women are more sensible about such things than girls like Lisa. But no women are less easy to deceive. Lisa's face became empty.

"You have another woman."

"But Lisa—we've seen so little of one another—almost a year now—you understand—"

"No, no, I don't mean that. You've a woman you love. You've altered. I can feel it."

"Ach, Lisa—"

"Yes, yes. Admit it."

"I don't really know myself, Lisa. Perhaps—"

She stood awhile. Then she nodded: "Yes—yes—of course— And I'm so stupid—and we have nothing in common really—" She passed her hand over her forehead. "I don't know how I came to . . ."

Her slender figure stood before me pathetically desiring and frail. The brocade slippers—the kimono—the long empty nights—memory . . .

"Au revoir, Lisa—"

"Are you going? You won't stay a bit longer? You are going—already?"

I knew what she meant. But I couldn't. It was extraordinary, but I couldn't, and I felt it strongly. It had never been so before. I had no

exaggerated ideas about fidelity. But it simply was not possible any more. I suddenly felt how far I had gone already from all that.

She stood framed in the doorway. "You are going?" She ran back. "Here, I know you left some money for me— under the newspaper. I don't want it. There—there—yes, only go—"

"I must, Lisa."

"You will never come again."

"Oh yes, Lisa."

"No, no, you will never return, I know. And you must never return. But go, do go now—"

She was crying. I went down the stairs and did not look back.

I walked a long time through the streets. It was a strange night. I was still wakeful and could not sleep. I passed the International, I thought of Lisa and the years gone by, of many things that I had forgotten; but it was all far away and seemed not to belong to me any more. Then I wandered down the street where Pat lived. The wind became stronger, all the windows in her place were in darkness, dawn was creeping on grey feet past the doorways; and at last I went home.

My God, thought I, I believe I am happy.

Chapter XIII

"The lady you are always hiding," said Frau Zalewski, "you have no need to hide. She can come quite openly. I like her."

"You haven't ever seen her," I replied.

"Don't worry, I have seen her," declared Frau Zalewski with emphasis. "I have seen her and I like her—very much, indeed—but she is not a woman for you."

"Really?"

"No, I've been wondering wherever in all your pubs you can have dug her up. But of course, the worst vagabond—"

"I think we're getting off the subject," I interrupted.

"That," said she, putting her hands on her hips, "is a woman for a man in good, secure circumstances. For a rich man, in short."

Direct hit, my boy, thought I. The very thing you lack.

"You could say that of any woman," I declared irritably.

She shook her grey locks. "You wait. The future will show."

"Ach, the future!" I flung my cuff links on the table. "Who cares about the future these days? Why should anyone bother about that now?"

Frau Zalewski looked pained and wagged her majestic head.

"Extraordinary creatures you young people are, altogether. The past you hate, the present you despise, and the future is a matter of indifference. How do you suppose that can lead to any good end?"

"Well, what do you mean by a good end?" I asked. "An end can be good only if everything before it has been bad. So a bad end is better."

"Those are Jewish perversions," replied Frau Zalewski with dignity, turning resolutely to the door. She had her hand already on the latch when she stopped short as if suddenly nailed to the spot.

"Dinner suit?" she breathed in astonishment. "You?"

With large eyes she contemplated Otto Köster's suit hanging on the wardrobe door. I had borrowed it, as I meant to go to the theatre with Pat that evening.

"Yes, me," said I poisojnously. "Your powers of association are unsurpassed, Frau Zalewski—"

She looked at me. An entire thunderstorm of ideas passed over her fat

face, ending in a broad initiated smirk.

"Aha!" said she. And again "Aha!" And then from outside, over her shoulder, with relish transfigured by woman's eternal delight in such discoveries: "So, that's how it is!"

"Yes, that's how it is, damned old witch," I growled after her when I was sure she could not hear me. Then I flung the box with my new patent leather shoes on the floor. A *rich man*—as if I didn't know that.

I called for Pat. She was in her room already dressed and waiting. It almost took my breath away when I saw her. For the first time since I had known her she was wearing evening dress.

The frock was of silver brocade and hung in graceful smooth lines from the straight shoulders. It looked narrow and was yet wide enough not to impede Pat's lovely, long stride. In front it came up high to the neck, but the back was cut away to a deep sharp angle. In it Pat gave the effect of a silver torch in the blue twilight, swiftly and amazingly changed, dignified and remote. Behind her like a shadow' rose the ghost of Frau Zalewski with uplifted finger.

"It's as well I didn't meet you first in that dress," said I. "I would never have trusted myself near you."

"I don't believe that just on your say-so, Robby.". She smiled. "Do you like it?"

"It's simply incredible. You are an entirely new woman in it."

"That's not incredible, though. That's what clothes are for."

"Maybe. But it floors me a bit. You want a very different man to match it. One with lots of money."

She laughed. "Men with lots of money are mostly awful, Robby."

"But not money, eh?"

"No." said she, "not money."

"I thought as much."

"Don't you think so, then?"

"Sure," said I. "Money may not make happiness—but it can be a great comfort."

"It makes one independent, darling, and that's still more. But I can put on another dress if you like."

"Absolutely not. It's superb. From this day forth I place dressmakers

above philosophers. Those people bring beauty into life, and that's worth a hundred times the most unfathomable meditations. But look out, or I'll be falling in love with you."

She laughed. Stealthily I glanced down at myself. Köster was bigger than I, and I had had to do some tricky work with safety-pins on the trousers to make them sit decently. They did sit, praise be.

We drove to the theatre in a taxi. On the way I was rather silent, without knowing quite why. As we got out and I was paying, I glanced, as under some compulsion, at the driver. His eyes were strained and red-rimmed, he was unshaven and looked very tired. He took the money indifferently.

"Had a good day?" I asked softly.

He looked up. "So-so—" said he uncommunicatively. He took me for some inquisitive fellow.

For a moment I had the feeling that I must get on the box beside him and drive off—then I turned round. There stood Pat, slim and graceful, a short silver jacket with wide sleeves over the silver frock, beautiful and expectant. "Quick, Bob, come, it begins in a minute."

People were piled up in the entrance. It was a big First Night, the theatre was floodlit; car upon car glided up; women in evening clothes got out, glittering with jewellery; men in tails, with pink upholstered faces, laughing, jolly, superior, self-assured—and, grinding and snarling among it all, the cab with the tired driver rattled off.

"Well, come, Robby," called Pat looking at me, radiant and excited. "Have you forgotten something?"

I gave a hostile look at the people around.

"No," said I, "I have forgotten nothing."

Then I went to the office and changed the tickets. I took two box seats, though they cost a fortune. I suddenly did not want Pat to sit among these assured people, to whom everything was self-evident. I did not want her to belong to them. I wanted to be alone with her.

It was a long time since I had been in a theatre. And I would not have come now had Pat not wanted it. Theatres, concerts, books—all these middle-class habits I had almost lost. It was not the time for them. Politics provided theatre enough—the shootings every night made another concert— and the gigantic book of poverty was more impressive than any library.

The circle and the stalls were full. No sooner had we found our seats than it was dark. Only the reflection of the footlights drifted through the

room. The music started full, and everything seemed to lift and sway.

I pushed my chair back into a corner of the box, whence I need see neither the stage nor the blanched faces of the spectators. I heard only the music and saw Pat's face.

The music enchanted the air. It was like the south wind, like a warm night, like swelling sails beneath the stars, completely and utterly unreal, this music to Hoffmann's Tales. It made everything spacious and colourful, the dark stream of life seemed pulsing in it; there were no burdens any more, no limits; there existed only glory and melody and love, so that one simply could not realize that, at the same time as this music was, outside there ruled poverty and torment and despair.

Pat's face was full of mystery, irradiated by the light from the stage. She was wholly surrendered; and I loved her that she did not lean toward me or reach for my hand, yes, did not once look at me, but appeared not to think of me at all and to have quite forgotten me. I hate it when people mix things, I hate the cowlike yearning toward one another while the beauty and the power of a great work breaks over one; I hate the swimming looks of lovers, the foolish blissful cuddling, the indecent sheepish happiness that can never rise above itself; I hate all the talk of becoming one through love; it seems to me we cannot sufficiently be two nor remove ourselves from one another often enough in order to meet again. Only those who are constantly alone know the joy of being together. Anything else breaks the spell of the tension. And what can more powerfully penetrate the magic circle of solitude than the uprush of emotion, the surrender to a shock, the might of the elements, storm, night music? And love . . .

The lights flamed up. I shut my eyes an instant. What had I been thinking of? Pat turned round. I saw the people pressing toward the doors. Itwas the long interval.

"Do you want to go out?" I asked.

Pat shook her head.

"Thank God for that. I hate the way people gape at each other out there."

I went to fetch her a glass of orange juice. The buffet was heavily besieged. Music makes some people extraordinarily hungry. The warm sausages were disappearing as if an epidemic of hunger typhus had broken out.

This would be the place for Mother, thought I, elbowing my way to the counter and taking the last glass of orange juice from under the nose on an indignant chap with a walrus moustache. He grunted with wrath.

"You've had two already," said I disarmingly.

"But I have a thirst for three," he replied.

There was no other reply to that but not to give way. Taking something from somebody else is one of the oldest practices of humanity—and it always affords the same satisfaction. Man is not kindly, and never will be.

When I arrived at the box with my glass someone was standing behind Pat's chair. Her head was turned back and she was talking with him vivaciously. "This is Herr Breuer, Robert," said she.

Herr Ox, thought I looking at him with displeasure. *Robert, she said, not Robby.* I put the glass on the parapet and prepared to wait until the fellow went. He had on a marvellously cut dinner suit. But he chattered about the production and the audience and still he stayed. Pat turned to me. "Herr Breuer has asked if we would not like to go to 'The Cascade' afterwards."

"Just as you like," said I.

Herr Breuer explained one might be able to get a dance perhaps. He was very polite and I liked him quite well actually. Only he had the disagreeable elegance and facility which I imagined could not fail of its effect on Pat, and which I myself did not possess. Suddenly—I could hardly believe my ears—I heard him say to Pat, "my dear/' Though there might have been a hundred good reasons why he should, I should have liked to heave him over into the orchestra on the spot.

The bell sounded. The musicians tuned their instruments. The violins made subdued little flageolette runs.

"Agreed then, we meet at the exit," said Breuer and went st lust

"Who's the tramp?" I asked.

"He isn't a tramp, he's a very nice man. An old friend."

"I've something against old friends," said I.

"Darling," replied Pat, "but listen—"

Cascade, thought I and reckoned up my money, *damned expensive dive.*

I followed along in sullen curiosity. This Breuer had recalled to me Frau Zalewski's ill-omened croakings. He was already waiting for us at the entrance.

I beckoned a taxi.

"Don't bother," said Breuer. "There's room in my car."

"Good," said I. It would have been ridiculous to do otherwise. But it annoyed me all the same.

Pat recognized Breuer's car. It was a big Packard, standing in the car park opposite. She walked straight up to it.

"It's a different colour, though," said she, stopping in front of it.

"Yes, grey," replied Breuer. "Don't you like it better?"

"Much better."

Breuer turned to me. "And you? Do you like the colour?"

"I don't know what it was before," said I.

"Black."

"Black also looks very well."

"True. But one must have a change. I'm going to do it again in the autumn."

We drove to "The Cascade," a very smart dance club with an excellent band.

"Seems to be full," said I delightedly as we stood at the entrance.

"Pity," said Pat.

"Ach, we'll fix that," announced Breuer and exchanged a few words with the manager. He seemed to be well known here, for we actually had a table brought and some chairs; and a few minutes later we were sitting in the best place in the whole room, whence we could survey the whole dance floor.

The band was playing a tango. Pat leaned over the parapet. *"Ach,* but it's a long time since I had a dance."

Breuer stood up. "Shall we?"

She looked at me beaming. "I'll order something in the meantime," said I.

The tango lasted a long while. Pat looked across now and then and smiled at me. . .I nodded back, but did not feel any too special. She looked wonderful and danced magnificently. Unfortunately Breuer danced equally well and the two looked most distinguished together. They danced as if they had often partnered one another before. I ordered myself a large rum.

The two came back. Breuer went to greet some people and for a moment Pat and I were alone.

"How long have you known the boy?" I asked.

"A long time. Why?"

"Ach, I only wondered. Did you often come here with him?"

She looked at me. "I don't remember any more, Robby."

"One remembers that all right," said I obstinately, though I knew what she meant.

She shook her head and smiled. I loved her very much at that moment. She meant to show me that all that had been, was forgotten. But something bored in me, something I felt to be ridiculous, myself, and yet something I could not shake off. I put my glass down on the table. "You can tell me. It doesn't signify."

She looked at me again. "Do you suppose we would be here otherwise?" she asked.

"No," said I ashamed.

The band started to play again. Breuer came up. "A Blues," said he to me. "Wonderful. Wouldn't you like to dance it?"

"No," I replied.

"Pity."

"You ought to try once, Robby," said Pat.

"I'd sooner not."

"But why not?" asked Breuer.

"I don't care for it," I replied unamiably. "I never learnt. Never had time. But you dance, I can amuse myself here all right."

Pat hesitated.

"But Pat—" said I. "You enjoy it so."

"That's true—but are you enjoying yourself too?"

"What do you think?" I showed her the glass. "This is a kind of dancing too."

They went. I beckoned a waiter and emptied my glass. Then I lolled on the table and counted the salted almonds. Beside me sat the shade of Frau Zalewski.

Breuer brought some people with him to the table. Two good-looking women and a younger fellow with a completely bald head. Afterward a fourth joined us. All of them light as cork, glib and sure. Pat knew them all four.

I felt as heavy as a clod. Until now I had always been alone with Pat. Now I was seeing for the first time people she had known before. I could not start anything with them. They moved easily and freely, they came from a life

where everything went smoothly, where one saw nothing one did not want to see; they came from another world. Had I been alone there, with t,enz or Köster, I should not have troubled about it. But Pat was there, Pat knew them, and that made everything seem wrong, it crippled me and forced me to make comparisons.

Breuer suggested going to another place.

"Robby," said Pat as we went out, "wouldn't you rather go home?"

"No," said I. "Why?"

"It's so boring for you."

"Not in the least. Why should it be boring? On the contrary. And you are enjoying it."

She looked at me but said nothing.

I started to drink. Not as before, but really. The chap with the bald head began to take notice. He asked what it was I was drinking. "Rum," said I. "Grog?" he asked. "No, rum," said I. He sampled it and choked. "Good heavens," said he respectfully, "one needs to be used to that." Now the two women also took notice. Pat and Breuer were dancing. Pat looked across often. I did not look any more. I knew it was unfair, but it came over me suddenly. And I was annoyed too that the others should remark my drinking. I had no wish to impress them like an undergraduate. I got up and went to the bar. Pat seemed quite strange to me. She could go to the devil with her people. She belonged to them. No, she didn't belong to them. Yes she did.

The bald head followed me. We had a vodka with the mixer. Mixers are always a comfort. You can get on with them anywhere, and without having to talk. This one was good too. Only the bald head was feeble. He wanted to unburden himself. A certain Fifi lay heavy on his soul. But that petered out soon. He told me Breuer had been in love with Pat for years. "Really?" said I. He sniggered. I silenced him with a Prairie Oyster. But it stuck in my head, what he had said. It annoyed me that I should come in on it. It annoyed me that I cared. And it annoyed me that I did not bring my fist down on the table. But somewhere I felt a cold lust for destruction that turned not against others, only against myself.

The bald head was soon speechless and disappeared. I remained sitting. Suddenly I felt a hard, firm breast against my arm. It was one of the women Breuer had introduced. She was sitting close beside me. Her oblique, grey-green eyes caressed me slowly. It was a look that left nothing more to be said —only something to be done.

"Wonderful to be able to drink like that," said she after a while. I said nothing. She stretched out a hand to my glass. The hand was like a lizard, glittering with jewels, dry and sinewy. It moved very slowly, as if it crawled. I knew what was coming. I'll soon settle you, thought I. You underestimate me, because you see I'm annoyed. But you're mistaken. I'm through with women already—it is love I'm not through with. It is the unrealisable that is making me miserable.

The woman began to talk. She had a glassy, brittle voice. I saw Pat looking across. I took no notice. But I took no notice either of the woman beside me. I had the feeling of slipping down a smooth bottomless pit. It had nothing to do with Breuer and the people. It had nothing to do with Pat even. It was the melancholy secret that reality can arouse desires but never satisfy them; that love begins with a human being but does not end in him; and that everything can be there: a human being, love, happiness, life—and that yet in some terrible way it is always too little, and grows ever less the more it seems.

I looked stealthily across at Pat. There she moved in her silver dress, young and lovely, a bright flame of life; I loved her, and if I should say to her "Come," she would come; nothing stood between us; we could be as near as only human beings can—and yet occasionally everything would in some puzzling way be overcast and full of torment, I could not free her from the circle of things, not tear her out from the contact of the existence that was above us and in us and compelled us to its laws, the breathing and the passing, the questionable glamour of the present immediately falling back into nothingness, the shimmering illusion of passion which in the possession is already lost again. It was never to be checked, never. Never would be loosed the rattling chain of time; never out of restlessness come rest—out of seeking, stillness; to falling come a halt. Not even from chance could I free her, from what had been before I knew her, from the thousand thoughts, memories, from all that had fashioned her before I was there, not even from these people here could I free her. . .

Beside me the woman was talking in her brittle voice. She was seeking a companion for the night, a bit of unfamiliar life to whet the appetite, in order to forget herself and the all too painful, too evident fact that nothing ever remained, no I and no You and least of all a We. Wasn't she at bottom seeking the same thing as I? A companion, in order to forget the loneliness of life, a comrade to withstand the meaninglessness of existence?

"Come," said I, "we want to go back. It is hopeless— what you want— and what I want."

She looked at me a moment. Then she threw back her head and laughed.

We went to a few other places. Breuer was heated, talkative and hopeful. Pat had become quieter. She asked me no questions, she made no reproaches, she did not attempt to explain anything, she was simply there; sometimes she danced and it was as if she were a still, lovely, graceful ship gliding amid a swarm of marionettes and caricatures, and sometimes she smiled at me.

The folly of the night clubs wiped its grey-yellow hands over walls and faces. The music seemed to be playing under a glass catafalque. The bald head was drinking coffee. The woman with the lizard hands was staring in front of her. From an overtired flowergirl Breuer bought roses and divided them between Pat and the two women.

"Shall we dance once together?" said Pat to me.

"No," said I, and thought of the hands that had touched her already to-day; "no"—and felt pretty foolish and mean.

"But yes," said she and her eyes darkened.

"No," I replied; "no, Pat."

Then at last we went. "I'll drive you home," said Breuer to me.

"Very good."

We had a rug in the car and placed it over Pat's knees. She looked suddenly very pale and tired. The woman from the bar thrust a piece of paper into my hand as I was leaving. I made as if nothing had happened and got in. As we went along I gazed out the window. Pat sat in the corner and did not move. I could not even hear her breathing. Breuer drove first to her place. He knew where she lived without asking. She got out. Breuer kissed her hand.

"Good night," said I, without looking at her.

"Where can I put you down?" Breuer asked me.

"At the next corner," said I.

"I'd gladly drive you home," he replied, rather too hastily and too politely.

He wanted to prevent my going back. I considered whether I should not land him one. But he was not worth the trouble.

"All right, then drive me to 'The Bar Freddy,' " said I.

"Can you get in there, then, at this hour?" he asked.

"It's nice of you to ask," said I; "but don't worry—I can get in anywhere still."

I no sooner said it than I was sorry. He had certainly been feeling grand and that he had been coming along finely all the evening. It was a pity to shake it. I parted from him more amiably than from Pat.

"The Bar" was still pretty full. Lenz and Ferdinand Grau were playing poker with Bollwies and a few others. "Sit in, Bob," said Gottfried; "it's poker weather."

"No," I replied.

"Look at that, then," said he, pointing to a pile of money on the table. "No bluffing either. Flushes are in the air."

"All right," said I, "give us here."

With two kings I bluffed four jacks out a window. "So," said I—"seems to be bluff weather too."

"It's that always," replied Ferdinand pushing a cigarette across to me.

I did not mean to stay long. But at last I had solid ground under my feet. I was not feeling too good; but at least this was my old, time-honoured homeland. "Bring us a half-bottle of rum here," I called to Fred.

"Try some port in it," said Lenz.

"No," I replied. "Haven't time for experiments. I want to get drunk."

"Then take sweet liquors. Had a row?"

"Nonsense."

"Don't talk, baby. You can't kid your old father Lenz, who is at home in all the recesses of the heart. Say yes, and get drunk."

"A man can't have a row with a woman. You can be annoyed with them at the most."

"Those are too fine distinctions for three o'clock in the morning. I've had rows with every one. If you don't have rows it's soon over."

"Right," said I. "Who leads?"

"You," said Ferdinand Grau. "My dear Bob, you have *Weltschmerz*. Don't try and fight against it. Life is gay but imperfect. But I must say, for *Weltschmerz* you bluff wonderfully. Two kings are pretty steep."

"I once saw a hand where there were seven thousand francs against two kings," said Fred from the bar counter.

"Swiss or French?" asked Lenz.

"Swiss."

"Lucky for you," replied Gottfried. "You wouldn't have dared interrupt the play for French, eh?"

We played on for an hour. I won a good deal. Bollwies lost steadily. I drank, but only got a headache. The brown, waving handkerchiefs refused to come. Everything only became sharper. My insides burned.

"So, now stop and eat something," said Lenz. "Fred, give hirn a sandwich and some sardines. Pocket the money, Bob."

"One more hand."

"All right. Last round. Double?"

"Double," said the others.

I bought rather rashly three cards to the ten king. They were jack, queen, and ace. I won with it against Bollwies who had an eight-high straight and raised it to the moon. Cursing he paid me over a pile of money. "You see," said Lenz. "Flush weather."

We sat down to the bar. Bollwies asked after Karl. He could not forget how Köster had beaten his sports car. He was always wanting to buy Karl.

"Ask Otto," said Lenz; "but I think he'd rather sell you a hand."

"Well, well," said Bollwies.

"You wouldn't understand that, of course," replied Lenz, "you mercenary son of the twentieth century."

Ferdinand Grau laughed. Fred too. In the end we were all laughing. Not to laugh at the twentieth century is to shoot yourself. But you can't laugh for long. It's too much a matter for tears.

"Can you dance, Gottfried?" I asked.

"Of course. I taught dancing once. Have you forgotten how?"

"Forgotten—let the man forget," said Ferdinand Grau.

"To forget is the secret of eternal youth. One grows old only through memory. There's much too little forgetting."

"No," said Lenz. "It's that the wrong things are forgotten."

"Can you teach me?" I asked.

"To dance? In one evening, baby. Is that all your trouble?"

"Haven't any trouble," said I.

"Headache."

"The sickness of our time, Bob," said Ferdinand. "It would be better to be born without a head."

I went on to the Café International. Alois was in the act of hauling down the shutters.

"Anyone there still?" I asked.

"Rosa."

"Come, let's all three have one more."

"All right."

Rosa was sitting by the bar knitting little woollen socks for her daughter. She showed me the pattern. She had already completed a jacket. "How's business?" I asked.

"Bad. Nobody has any money."

"Would you like me to lend you some? Here—been winning at poker."

"Winnings work wonders," said Rosa spitting on it and putting it away.

Alois brought three glasses. Later, when Fritzi came, one more.

"Knock-off time," said he then. "I'm dead-tired."

He turned out the light. We went. Rosa said good-bye at the door. Fritzi hooked on to Alois' arm. She walked beside him, fresh and light. He shuffled along over the pavement with his fiat feet. I stood and watched them. I saw how Fritzi stooped down to the grimy, crooked waiter and kissed him. He put her away indifferently. And suddenly, I don't know how-it came, but as I turned and looked down the empty street and saw the houses with their dark windows and the cold night sky, such a mad longing for Pat came over me that I thought I should fall. I understood nothing any more, myself, my behavior, the whole evening, nothing.

I leaned against the wall of a house and stared ahead. I could not understand why I had done it. I had run into something there that had rent me asunder, made me unreasonable and unjust, tossed me hither and thither, and destroyed for me all I had laboriously built up. I stood there helpless not knowing what to do. I did not want to go home—there it would be still worse. At last I remembered that Alfons' must still be open. I went there meaning to stay until morning.

Alfons did not say much when I entered. He gave me a short glance and went on reading his paper. I sat down at a table and dozed. There was no one else there. I thought of Pat. Always of Pat. I thought of how I had behaved. Suddenly every detail came back to me. Everything turned against me. I alone was to blame. I had been mad. I stared at the table. The blood raged in my head. I was bitter and furious with myself and at my wits' end. It was I, I

alone, that had ruined everything.

There was a sudden crash and tinkle of broken glass. With .the whole weight of my fist I had smashed my glass to smithereens. "One form of amusement," said Alfons, getting up.

He pulled the splinters out of my hand. "Sorry," said I; "forgot where I was for the moment."

He fetched cotton wool and sticking plaster. "Go to a whore shop," said he, "that's better."

"It's all right," I replied. "It's over now. Only an attack of anger." >

"You must amuse anger away, not annoy it away," declared Alfons.

"True," said I, "but you have to be able to."

"All training. You all want to run your heads through the wall. But it passes with the years."

He put the *Miserere* from *Il Trovatore* on the gramophone. It was getting rapidly lighter.

I went home. Alfons had given me a large glass of Fernet-Branca to drink. I now felt soft axes chopping over my eyes. The street was no longer flat. My shoulders were heavy as lead. I was finished.

Slowly I climbed the stairs and was searching my pocket for the key. Then in the semidarkness I heard someone breathing—something pale, indistinct, squatting on the upper steps. I took three strides.

"Pat—" said I uncomprehendingly. "Pat—what are you doing here?"

She moved. "I believe I've been asleep."

"Yes, but how did you get here?"

"Well, I have your house key—"

"I don't mean that. I mean—" The drunkenness receded, I saw the worn treads of the stairs,_the peeling wallpaper and the silver dress, the narrow, shining shoes.-"I mean, that you are here at all—"

"I've been asking myself that a long time."

She stood up and stretched as if it were the most natural thing in the world to be sitting on the stairs in the early hours of the morning. Then she sniffed.. "Lenz would say— cognac, rum, cherry, absinth—"

"Fernet-Branca even," I acknowledged, at last beginning to get everything straight. "Damn my eyes, but you are a marvellous girl, Pat, and I am a terrible idiot."

I picked her up quickly, opened the door and carried her along the corridor. She lay in my arms, a silver heron, a tired bird; I turned my head

aside that she should not smell my schnapps breath, and I felt that she trembled, though she smiled.

I put her in an armchair, turned on the light and brought a rug. "If only I had had any idea, Pat—instead of lounging around I might have—*Ach*, miserable bonehead. I did ring up from Alfons', and whistled outside your place. I thought you weren't having any, as you didn't answer—"

"Why didn't you come back, then, after you brought me home?"

"Yes, I might have known—"

"It would be better next time if you gave me your room key as well," said she; "then I won't have to wait outside." She smiled, but her lips quivered, and I suddenly realized what it had meant for her—this coming back, this waiting, and this plucky, jollying tone now.

"Pat," said I hastily, completely bewildered. "You're frozen, surely. You must have something to drink; I saw a light in Orlow's room when I was outside; I'll go at once, these Russians always have tea, I'll be back in a moment"—I felt myself go hot all over—"I'll never forget in all my life, Pat," said I from the doorway and went swiftly down the passage.

Orlow was still up. He was sitting in front of his icon in the corner of the room, before which a lamp was burning; his eyes were red, and on the table a little samovar was steaming.

"Excuse me," said I, "but an unforeseen accident—could you give me some hot tea?"

Russians are accustomed to accidents. He gave me two glasses, some sugar, and filled a plate with little cakes.

"I'm delighted to be of service," said he. "May I also— I've often been in similar . . . A few coffee beans—to chew—"

"Thank you," said I, "really, I thank you. I'd be glad to take them."

"If you need anything else," said he with utmost gra-ciousness, "I shall be up for some time yet; it would be a pleasure to me—"

As I walked back along the corridor I munched the coffee beans. They took away the smell of the schnapps. Pat was sitting beside the lamp powdering herself. I stood a moment in the doorway. It quite touched me to see her sitting here looking so attentively into her little looking-glass and dabbing her cheeks with the powder puff.

"Drink a bit of tea," said I. "It is quite hot."

She took the glass, I watched while she drank.

"The devil only knows what was the matter to-night, Pat."

"Oh, I know," she replied.

"So? I don't."

"And you don't have to, Robby. You know a bit too much already, if you ask me, to be really happy."

"Maybe," said I. "But it doesn't do that I get only more and more childish the longer I know you."

"Oh, yes, it does. Better than if you got always more and more sensible."

"That's one way of looking at it," said I. "You have a good way of helping one out of a jam. But everything seemed to come all of a heap."

She put the glass on the table. I leaned against the bed. I had the feeling of having come home at last after a long, difficult journey.

The birds began twittering. Outside a door banged. That was Frau Bender, the orphanage nurse. I looked at my watch. In half an hour Frida would be in the kitchen; then we would no longer be able to escape unseen. Pat was still sleeping. She breathed deep and regularly. It was a shame to wake her. But it had to be.

"Pat—"

She murmured something in her sleep. "Pat—" I cursed all furnished rooms. "Pat, it's time. We must get you dressed."

She opened her eyes and smiled, still warm from sleep, like a child. I never ceased to be astonished at this cheerfulness on waking, and liked it in her very much. I am never cheerful when I wake.

"Pat—Frau Zalewski is cleaning her teeth."

"I'm staying with you to-day—"

"Her?"

"Yes."

I sat up. "Splendid idea—but your things—these shoes and dress are for evening."

"Then I'll stay here till evening."

"And what about home?"

"We'll telephone that I've stayed somewhere for the night."

"We'll do it now. Are you hungry?"

"Not yet."

"In any case I'll dash out and grab a few fresh rolls. They're hanging outside on the passage door. Now's just about the time."

When I came back Pat was standing at the window. She had on only her silver shoes. The soft of early morning fell like a shawl over her shoulders.

"We've forgotten about yesterday, eh, Pat?" said I.

She nodded without turning round.

"We simply won't go any more together with other people. True love can't abide people. Then we won't have any more rows and attacks of jealousy. This Breuer and the whole set can go to the devil, eh?"

"Yes," said she, "and Markowitz too."

"Markowitz? Who's that then?"

"The one you sat with in the bar at 'The Cascade.'"

"Aha," said I, suddenly rather pleased. "Aha, that one."

I turned out my pockets. "Look at that now. It did serve some useful purpose anyway. I won a heap of money at poker. Now we'll go out again, to-night, eh? But properly, without other people. We have forgotten them, eh?"

She nodded.

The sun rose behind the roofs of the Trades Hall. Windows began to glitter. Pat's hair was full of light and her shoulders were golden.

"What was it you said, what does this Breuer do actually? As a profession, I mean?"

"Architect."

"Architect," said I, rather winged—I would sooner have heard he was nothing at all—"Well, after all—architect; what's that anyway, eh, Pat?"

"Yes, darling."

"Nothing special, is it?"

"Nothing at all," said Pat with conviction, turning round and laughing. "It's nothing at all, absolute nothing. Just mud it is."

"And this shack, it's not so bad, eh, Pat? Other people have better, of course—"

"It is wonderful, this shack," she interrupted me; "it's a perfectly lovely shack, I really don't know any nicer, darling."

"And I, Pat, I have my failings, of course, and I'm only a taxi driver, but —"

"You are a perfect darling—a bread-snatcher, a rum drinker—a darling you are."

With a swing she threw her arms about my neck. *"Ach*, you chump I How good it is to be alive!"

"Only with you, Pat. Truly."

The morning rose up wonderful and bright. A thin mist still lay over the gravestones below and drifted to and fro. The treetops were already full of light. Out of the chimneys of the houses smoke was curling up. The first newspapers were being called through the streets. We lay down to a morning sleep, a waking sleep, dreaming on the borders of sleep, each in the arms of the other—wonderful hovering, breath in breath. Then about nine o'clock, as "Geheimrat Burkhard" first I telephoned Lieutenant Colonel Egbert von Hake, personally; and then I telephoned to Lenz, asking him to take over my morning cruise with the taxi.

He interrupted me. "Leave it to me, child; not for nothing is your Gottfried a connoisseur in the vagaries of the human heart. I had counted on it already. Lots of fun, Goldbaby."

"You shut up," said I happily and then explained in the kitchen that I was not well and would stay in bed till midday. Three times I had to beat off the assault of Frau Zalewski, offering me camomile tea, aspirin, and cold packs. Then I could smuggle Pat into the bathroom, and we had peace.

Chapter XIV

A week later the baker turned up unexpectedly in the yard.

"You go out, Bob," said Lenz with a poisonous look through the window, "old Pastry-Casanova's sure to be wanting something for nothing."

The baker did look down-in-the-mouth. "Something wrong with the car?" I asked.

He shook his head. "No, no. Running splendidly. As good as new now."

"Don't I know it," I affirmed, eyeing him with more interest.

"Well, you see—" said he. "It's this way—I rather want another car—a bigger one—"

He glanced round the yard. "Didn't I see a Cadillac last time I was here?"

I saw at once what the trouble was. The dark person he lived with had been busy kneading him a bit.

"The Cadillac? Oh, yes," said I with enthusiasm; "you ought to have got in on that when you had the chance. An absolute bargain. Went for seven thousand marks. A gift, you might say—"

"Well, hardly a gift."

"A gift," I repeated emphatically, considering what should be the next move, "I can enquire, if you like," said I then; "perhaps the chap who bought it is needing money. These things go quickly nowadays. Half a mo'."

I went into the shop and quickly told what had happened. Gottfried leapt up. "Where can we lay hands on an old Cadillac, boys? Come on, get busy!"

"You leave that to me," said I; "you watch the baker doesn't escape in the meantime."

"Done." Gottfried vanished.

I rang up Blumenthal. I hadn't much hope, but one could only try. He was in his office. "Do you want to sell your Cadillac?" I asked at once.

Blumenthal laughed.

"I've got somebody for it," I went on, "cash down."

"Cash down," replied Blumenthal after a moment's reflection. "That's a word of purest poetry these days—"

"That's my idea, too," said I, brightening suddenly. "Then how is it, can we talk it over?"

"One can always talk," observed Blumenthal.

"Good. When can I see you?"

"This afternoon after lunch I have time. Let's say around two, in the office here."

"Right."

I hung up. "Otto," said I rather excitedly to Köster, "I never expected it, but I believe our old Cadillac is coming back."

Köster laid aside all his papers. "Really? Does he want to sell?"

I nodded and looked through the window to where Lenz was talking hard to the baker. "He's making a mess of it," said I uncomfortably; "he's talking too much. That baker's a tower of suspicion; you could only persuade him by saying nothing. I must go out and relieve Gottfried at once."

Köster laughed. "Right—neck or nothing, Bob."

I winked at him and went. But I could hardly believe my ears: so far from singing premature hymns to the Cadillac, Gottfried was entirely engrossed in explaining to the baker how the South American Indians make their maize bread.

I gave him an approving glance and then turned to the baker: "Unfortunately the chap doesn't want to sell—"

"What did I tell you?" said Lenz promptly, as if we had already discussed it.

I gave a shrug. "It's a pity—but I can understand—"

The baker stood there irresolute. I looked at Lenz.

"Well, couldn't you try him again perhaps?" he asked immediately.

"I'm doing that in any case," I replied. "I've arranged anyway to see him this afternoon. Where could I get hold of you afterwards?" I asked the baker.

"I'll be in the neighbourhood here around four. I could look in again then."

"Good—I'll be sure to know definitely by then. I hope we do pull it off."

The baker nodded. Then he got into his Ford and steamed off.

"Are you quite God-forsaken?" burst out Lenz the moment he was round the corner.

"No sooner do I get a good grip on the boy than you let him go, just like that."

"Logic and psychology, my dear Gottfried," I replied clapping him on the shoulder. "You don't understand that sort of thing yet."

He shook off my hand. "Psychology—" said he contemptuously. "The best psychology is' a good opportunity. And that was one. The fellow will

never come back."

"He'll be back at four o'clock—."

Gottfried looked at me pityingly. "Will you bet?" he asked.

"Sure," I replied, "but you'll fall in. I know the chap better than you. You must bring him several times to the fire. Besides, I can't sell him something we haven't got."

"Ach, du lieber Gott, if that's all you understand," said Gottfried, shaking his head, "then you'll never get any where, baby. That's the very first law of good business. Come now, I'll give you a free course in modern business methods."

After lunch I went to Blumenthal. On the way I had the feeling of a young billy-goat going to call on an old wolf. The sun was burning on the asphalt, and with every step I felt less desire to be turned on the spit by Blumenthal. It would be best to make short work of it.

"Herr Blumenthal," said I quickly as I entered, before he could begin, "a fair proposition from the start. Five thousand five hundred marks you paid for the Cadillac— I'm offering you six—on condition I do actually dispose of it. That will be settled this evening."

Blumenthal was sitting enthroned behind his desk in the act of eating an apple. He stopped eating and looked at me a moment.

"Good," said he then, and went on eating.

I waited till he threw the core into the wastepaper basket.

"Then you are agreeable?" I asked.

"Moment." He produced a fresh apple from the drawer of his desk. "Won't you have one too?"

"Thanks, not just now."

He bit into it. "Eat lots of apples. Herr Lohkamp. Apples prolong life. Every day a few apples, and you never need a doctor."

"Not even if you break an arm?"

He grinned, threw away the second core and stood up. "Then you wouldn't break an arm."

"Sounds practical," said I and waited for what would come next. This apple talk was suspicious to me.

Blumenthal took a box of cigars from a little cupboard and offered them to me. They were the Coronas I knew of old. "Do they prolong life too?" I

asked.

"No, they shorten it. That balances the apples." He blew out a cloud of smoke and looked at me with his head to one side like a meditative fowl, from below upward. "Balance, Herr Lohkamp, always balance—that's the whole secret of life."

"If you can."

He winked. "Quite; to be able, that's the secret, of course. We know too much, and can do too little. Because we know too much." He laughed. "Forgive me—after lunch I'm always a bit philosophical."

"The best time, too," said I. "Now, abo.ut the Cadillac; we balance there, too, no?"

He raised a hand. "One second."

I lowered my head resignedly. Blumenthal saw it and laughed. "Not as you think. I only meant to pay you a compliment. Overtrumping from the start, with open cards. That was well calculated for old Blumenthal. Do you know what I was expecting?"

"That I would begin by offering four thousand five hundred—"

"Exactly. But you would have fared badly. You're gding to sell for seven, aren't you?"

I shrugged my shoulders in a noncommittal way. "Why seven exactly?"

"Because that was your first price to me."

"You have a splendid memory," said I.

"For figures. Only for figures. Unfortunately. Well, to come to a conclusion—you can have the car for the price."

He held out his hand and I seized it. "Thank God for that," said I with relief, "the first stroke of business for long enough. The Cadillac seems to bring us luck."

"Me too," said Blumenthal. "I've made five hundred on it, too, don't forget."

"That's so. But tell me, why do you want to sell it again so soon actually? Don't you like it?"

"Pure superstition," explained Blumenthal. "I never miss a deal by which I stand to make."

"Fine superstition," I replied.

He wagged his shining pate. "You don't believe-it—well, it's right. So that nothing shall go amiss with me—in other things. To neglect a deal to-day is to tempt Providence. And there's none of us can afford that."

At half-past four Gottfried Lenz, with a significant expression, placed an empty gin bottle on the table in front of me. "I'd like you to fill it, baby. Free of charge. You remember our bet?"

"I remember," said I. "But you come too soon."

Without a word Gottfried held his watch before my nose.

"Half-past four," said I. "Astronomical time, apparently. After all anyone can be late. I'll double the bet, two to one—"

"Accepted," announced Gottfried cheerfully. "Makes four bottles of gin gratis for me. That's what is called heroism in a lost cause. Honourable, baby, but mistaken."

"You wait."

I was far from being so confident as I made out. On the contrary, I felt pretty certain now the baker would not come back. I ought to have made sure of him this morning. He was too unreliable.

As the siren of the spring-mattress factory opposite tooted five Gottfried silently placed three more empty gin bottles in front of me on the table. Then he leaned against the window and stared at me. "I'm thirsty," said he after a while with emphasis.

At that instant I heard the unmistakable rattle of a Ford engine out on the street, and immediately after the baker's car turned in at our entrance.

"If you are thirsty, my dear Gottfried," I replied with dignity, "just run along and buy the two bottles of rum I've.won with my bet. You can have a pull gratis. See-the baker out there? Psychology, my boy. And now clear away the empty gin bottles. Then afterwards you can take out the taxi. You're too young yet for the finer work. Cheerio, my son."

I went out and told the baker that the car was apparently to be had. The client was asking seven thousand five hundred, but if he saw cash for it, he might come down to seven thousand.

The baker listened so distractedly that I stopped short.

"I have to ring the chap again about six," said I finally.

"About six?" The baker roused out of his inattention. "At six I have to —" He turned to me suddenly. "Would you come with me?"

"Where to?" I asked in amazement.

"To your friend, the painter. The picture is ready."

"Ach, so, to Ferdinand Grau?"

He nodded. "Come along, will you? Then we can discuss the car afterwards."

He seemed to lay some store on not going alone. On the other hand I also lay some store on not letting him alone again. "All right," said I, therefore. "It's a fair distance— we'd better set off at once."

Ferdinand Grau looked ill. His face was grey-green, shadowed and puffy. He greeted us at the door of the studio. The baker hardly looked at him. He was strangely unsure of himself and excited. "Where is it?" he asked immediately.

Ferdinand pointed with a hand to the window. The picture was leaning there on an easel. The baker walked across quickly and then stopped motionless in front of the picture. After a while he removed his hat. He had been in such a hurry he had quite forgotten it before.

Ferdinand and I remained by the door. "How goes it, Ferdinand?" I asked.

He made a vague gesture.

"Something wrong?"

"What should be wrong?"

"You look so bad—"

"Nothing else?"

"No," said I, "nothing else."

He put his great hand on my shoulder and smiled with an expression like an old Saint Bernard's.

We waited some time longer. Then we went across to the baker. I was surprised when I saw the picture. The head had come up very well, from the photo of the wedding and the second care-ridden snap of a woman still young who gazed in front of her with grave, rather bewildered eyes.

"Yes," said the baker without turning round. "That is she."

He said it more to himself, and it seemed to me as if he did not even know he had said it.

"Have you enough light?" asked Ferdinand.

The baker did not answer.

Ferdinand went forward to turn the easel a bit. Then he walked back and nodded to me to come with him into the little room adjoining the studio.

"I would never have thought it," said he, surprised. "It's got.the old

rebate-machine on the raw! He's blubbering—"

"It gets everybody sometime," I replied. "Only for him it's too late."

"Too late," said Ferdinand; "always too late. It's tie way with life, Bob."

He walked slowly to and fro. "We'll leave him quietly awhile to himself there," said he. "What do you say to a game of chess in the meantime?"

"You are a cheerful soul, Ferdinand," said I.

He stopped. "Why not? Doesn't do him any harm, doesn't do him any good. If you were always thinking of that sort of thing, why nobody would ever laugh again, Bob."

"You're right there," said I. "Then let's have a quick game."

We set up the men and began. Ferdinand won without much difficulty. He mated me with rook and bishop without using the queen.

"Don't know how you do it," said I. "You look as if you haven't been to sleep for three nights. And yet ..you play like a pirate."

"I always play well when I'm melancholy," replied Ferdinand.

"Why are you melancholy?"

"Ach, I don't know. Because it's getting dark. All decent people are melancholy when evening comes. Not for any particular reason. Just on general grounds."

"But only when.they're alone," said I.

"Of course. The hour of the shadows. The hour of loneliness. The hour when cognac tastes best."

He fetched a bottle and two glasses. "Shouldn't we go in to the baker?" I asked.

"In a minute." He poured out. *"Pros't,* Bob. Because we all must die."

"Pros't, Ferdinand. Because we're still here."

"Well," said he, "it hasn't wanted much sometimes. Let's have one to that too."

"Right."

We went back into the studio. It had grown darker. The baker with hunched shoulders was still standing before the picture. He looked pitifully lost in the great, bare room, and it struck me he had become smaller.

"Shall I pack up the picture for you?" asked Ferdinand.

He gave a start of alarm. "No."

"Then I'll send it to-morrow?"

"Can't it remain here still?" asked the baker hesitantly.

"But why?" replied Ferdinand astonished, and coming nearer. "Don't you

like it?"

"Yes—but I would sooner leave it here."

"I don't understand."

The baker looked at me for help. I understood—he was afraid to hang the picture at home with the black bitch. Perhaps, too, he felt a certain fear before the dead woman, of taking her there.

"But Ferdinand," said I, "the picture can stay here, can't it, if it is paid for?"

"That, of course."

The baker, relieved, took his chequebook from his pocket. The two went to the table.

"Four hundred marks the remainder?" asked the baker.

"Four hundred and twenty," said Ferdinand, "including discount. Do you want a receipt?"

"Yes," replied the baker, "for the accountants."

In silence they wrote out the cheque and the receipt. I remained by the window and looked around. In the half-light of dusk the faces of the unclaimed and unpaid-for gleamed on the walls in their golden frames. They looked like a ghostly assemblage from the other world and their steady gaze seemed turned upon the picture by the window, which was now to join them and over which the evening was shedding its last glow. It was a queer atmosphere —the two bowed, writing figures at the table, the shadows and the many silent portraits.

The baker returned to the window. His bloodshot eyes looked like glass marbles, his mouth was half-open, the under lip dropped so that one could see the stained teeth —it was both comic and sad the way he stood there. On the floor above the studio someone started playing the piano, some finger exercise or other, always the same sequence .of notes. It sounded thin and complaining. Ferdinand Grau was still standing by the table. He lit himself a cigar. The light of the match illumined his face. The half-dark room appeared monstrously large and very blue against the little red glow.

"Can you still change something in the picture?" asked the baker.

"What is it?"

Ferdinand came forward. The baker pointed to the jewellery.

"Could you take that out again?"

It was the enormous gold brooch he had asked for as an extra when he ordered the picture.

"Certainly," said Ferdinand, "as a matter of fact, it disturbs the face. The portrait gains if it comes out."

"I think so too." He rambled around awhile. "What . would it cost?"

Ferdinand and I glanced at one another. "It wouldn't cost anything," said Ferdinand generously; "on the contrary, you would stand to get something back. There would be less in it then, you see."

The baker lifted his head in surprise. For a moment it looked as if he meant to go into the matter. But then he said with finality: *"Ach,* no, don't bother about that—after all, you did have to paint it."

"That is also true—"

We left. On the stairs, as I saw the stooping back in front of me, I was a bit troubled about the baker and the tact that his conscience had smitten him in the matter of the swindle with the brooch. I didn't quite like going for him with the Cadillac while he was in this frame of mind. But then I reflected that part at least of his very laudable regret for his dead wife arose only because the black person at home was such a bitch, and I felt quite fresh again.

"We can discuss the matter at my place," said he, outside.

I nodded. It would suit me very well. The baker imagined, doubtless, he would be stronger within his own four walls—but I was counting on the black one for support.

She was already at the door awaiting us. "Hearty congratulations," said I before the baker could open his mouth.

"What for?" she asked quickly, with darting eyes.

"Your Cadillac," I replied imperturbably.

"Sweetheart!" With a bound she was hanging on the baker's neck.

"But we're not there yet." He attempted to free himself and make some explanation. But she held him tight and tantalizingly spun him round in circles so that he could not get a word in. Alternating I saw over his shoulder her sly, winking face and over her shoulder his reproachful, vainly protesting weevil's head.

At last he succeeded in freeing himself. "We are not so far by any means," he panted.

"Oh, yes," said I heartily, "we are so far. I'll lay my hat I can bring him down the last five hundred marks. You won't pay a pfennig more than seven thousand marks for the Cadillac. Do you agree?"

"Of course," said the black one quickly. "Surely that's cheap, sweetheart."

"Stop!" The baker held up his hand.

"Now what is the matter with you?" She went for him. "First you say you'll, get the car, and now you stand there again and say you won't."

"He will, all right," I interposed. "We've discussed it already."

"Well, sweetheart—why, then—" She leaned close against him. He tried to free himself once more but she pressed her full breasts against his arm. He made an exasperated grimace, but his resistance was weakening.

"The Ford—" said he.

"Will be taken in part payment, of course."

"Four thousand marks?"

"It cost you all that?" I asked amiably.

"It must be taken in payment for four thousand marks," declared the baker firmly. He had at last found the point for counterattack after the first surprise. "The car's as good as new."

"New?" said I. "After that enormous repair—"

"You admitted it yourself only this morning."

"This morning it was another matter. There is new and new—according as you are buying or selling. For four thousand marks your Ford would need to have fenders of gold."

"Four thousand marks, or it's nothing," said the baker pig-headedly. He was now his old self again and apparently meant to make good any recent sentimentality.

"Then *au revoir*," I replied, and turned to the black one. "I'm sorry, madam—but I cannot make a losing deal. We make nothing on the Cadillac anyway, so I can't possibly take an old Ford in payment at an enormous price. Good-bye."

She held me back. Her eyes flashed and she now fell on the baker so that he did not know if he were coming or going. "You have said yourself a hundred times the Ford isn't worth a thing any more," she hissed finally with tears in her eyes.

"Two thousand marks," said I. "Two thousand marks, though that is suicide."

The baker said nothing.

"Well come on, say something. What are you standing around there for and not opening your mouth?" spat the black one.

"You will excuse me," said I, "I'll just go and get the Cadillac. Perhaps you'll talk it over in the meantime between yourselves."

I had the feeling I could not do better than vanish. Darkie would follow up the business for me.

An hour later I was there with the Cadillac. I saw immediately that the quarrel had been settled in the simplest way. The baker looked a bit rumpled and there was a bed feather hanging from his coat—the dark one on the other hand was flashing, breasts dancing; and she smiled, satisfied and treacherous. She had changed her dress and was now wearing a thin, clinging silk frock. In an unobserved moment she nodded to me and winked an eye to say all was in order.

We made a trial run. Darkie snuggled down comfortably into the wide seat and prattled continuously. I should have liked to throw her out of the window, but I had need of her still. The baker sat beside me rather glum. He was mourning in advance for his money—perhaps the most sincere mourning there is.

We pulled up outside the baker's house and went in again. The baker left the room to get the money. He now looked like an old man and I saw that his hair was dyed.

The dark one passed her hands over her dress. "We did that pretty well, what?"

"Yes," said I reluctantly.

"That will cost you a hundred marks for me."

"Ach, so?" said I.

"The stingy old buck," she whispered confidentially, coming nearer, "has money to burn. But to get anything out of him! Refuses even to make a will. And afterwards of course everything will go to the children, and where will I be? There's no fun either with him always rowing—"

She came still nearer and shook her breasts. "Then I'll come over to-morrow sometime for the hundred marks? When will you be there? Or will you be passing this way?" She giggled. "To-morrow afternoon I'll be alone here."

"I'll send it over to you," said I.

She giggled again. "Bring it yourself. Or are you afraid?"

She took me for an innocent apparently, and meant to make quite clear to

me how things stood.

"Not afraid," said I, "but I haven't time. I have to go to see the doctor to-morrow. An old syphilis—spoils life a bit."

She stepped back so quickly that she almost fell over a plush armchair. At that moment the baker came in again. He looked at the dark one suspiciously. Then he counted out the money in cash on the table. He paid slowly and hesitantly. His shadow swayed on the pink carpet of the room and counted with him. As I wrote out the receipt it struck me that this had all happened once before to-day— only Ferdinand Grau had been in my place. Though it had no significance, it seemed to me queer.

I was glad when I was outside again. The air was soft and summery. The Cadillac winked from the edge of the street.

"Well, thanks, old boy," said I, patting the radiator. "Come again soon."

Chapter XV

The morning was clear and sparkling over the meadows. Pat and I were sitting on the edge of a clearing having breakfast. I had taken two weeks' leave and was on the way with Pat. We were making for the sea.

On the roadside stood a little, old Citroën. We had taken it in part payment against the baker's Ford and Köster had lent it to me for my leave. It looked like a patient pack-mule, so laden was it with trunks.

"Let's hope he doesn't collapse on the road," said I.

"He won't collapse," replied Pat.

"How do you know?"

"Self-evident. Because it's our holiday, Robby."

"Maybe," said I. "But I know his back axle. It looks pretty sad. Especially with that load."

"He's one of Karl's brothers. He'll hold out."

"A mighty rickety brother."

"Stop the abuse, Robby. At this moment he is the love-" liest car I know."

"Come over here," said I.

"What do you want then?"

"Difficult to say."

We lay for some time side by side in the meadow. The wind blew warm and soft from the wood. It smelt of pines and wild flowers.

"Robby," asked Pat after a while, "what flowers are those over there by the stream?"

"Anemones," I replied without looking up.

"But darling! Those aren't anemones, anemones are much smaller; besides they only flower in spring."

"True," said I. "It's lady's smock."

She shook her head. "Lady's smock I know. This looks quite different."

"Then it's hemlock."

"But Robby! Hemlock is white, not red."

"Then I don't know. So far I've always got through with those three flower names, when I've been asked. They've always believed one of them."

She laughed. "What a pity. If I'd known I would have been satisfied with

anemones."

"Hemlock," said I. "I've always had most success with hemlock."

She sat up. "That is very encouraging. Are you often asked, then?"

"Not too often. And under quite other circumstances."

She propped her arms on the ground. "It really is a shame the way man runs about the earth and yet knows nothing at all about it. Not even a few names."

"Don't grieve," said I, "a much greater shame is that man doesn't even know what he runs about the earth for. And a few names more or less won't help there much."

"So you say. But I believe you only say it out of idleness."

I turned over. "Of course. But not enough has been thought about idleness. It is the foundation of all happiness and the end of all philosophy. Come, lie down here again. Man lies down much too little. He stands and sits about all the time. It's not good for animal comfort. Only when a man lies down is he quite at peace with himself."

A car came humming along and drove past.

"Baby Mercedes," said I without sitting up. "Four-cylinder."

"Here comes another," replied Pat.

"Yes, I can hear it. A Renault. Has it a radiator like a pig's nose?"

"Yes."

"Then it is a Renault. But listen now, here comes something real, A Lancia. I bet he's chasing the other two like a wolf after a couple of sheep. Just listen to the engine. Like an organ."

The car swept by.

"I suppose you know more than three names there?" asked Pat.

"Of course. And they are right, what's more."

She laughed. "Isn't that really sad, or not?"

"Not at all sad. Only natural. To me a good car is preferable to twenty fields of flowers."

"Unregenerate son of the twentieth century I I suppose you're not at all sentimental."

"Oh, yes, you just heard: over cars."

She looked at me.

"Me, too," said she.

Out of the fir trees a cuckoo called. Pat started to count.

"Why do you do that?"

"Don't you know? As often as he calls, so many years will you live."

"Ach, so, yes. But there's another one. When a cuckoo calls, shake your money. Then it will multiply."

I took my loose change from my pocket and shook it vigorously in my cupped hands.

"Just like you," said Pat laughing. "I want life and you want money."

"In order to live," I replied. "A true idealist strives for money. Money is mental freedom. And freedom is life."

"Fourteen," counted Pat. "I've heard you talk differently about it before now."

"That was in my dark time. One shouldn't talk scornfully about money. It's money brings many a woman a lover. Love on the other hand makes many a man avaricious. Money therefore furthers the ideal—love versus materialism."

"This is your good day," observed Pat. "Thirty-five."

"The man" I went on, "only becomes avaricious as a result of the woman's desires. If there wereh't women there wouldn't be money, and the men would be a race of heroes. In the trenches there were no women—it didn't count for much there, either, how well off a man was. It came back to what he was as a man. And that's not to say anything for the trenches; that's only to show love up in its true light. It rouses the evil instincts in man—the urge to possession, standing, profits, comfort. It's not for nothing dictators like to see their subordinates married—that way they are less dangerous. And not for nothing do Catholic priests have no wives—they would never be such bold missionaries otherwise."

"This is a really marvellous day for you," said Pat gratefully. "Fifty-two."

I put my money back into my pocket and lit a cigarette.

"Wouldn't you like to stop counting soon?" I asked. "You'll be going well over seventy if you're not careful."

"A hundred, Robby. A hundred is a good figure. I'd like to get that far."

"Hat's off! That's courage. But what will you do with it all?"

She gave me a quick look up and down. "I have other ideas than you on the subject."

"You must have, indeed. But the first seventy years are the worst. After that it ought to be easier."

"One hundred!" announced Pat and we set off again.

The sea came towards us like an immense silver sail. Long before we

reached it we could detect its salt breath; the horizon became ever brighter and more distant, and suddenly it lay before us, restless, mighty and unending.

The road led in a curve close by it. Then came a wood and behind it a village. We enquired for the house where we were to stay. It lay some distance outside the village. Köster had given us the address. He had been a year there after the war.

It was a small villa standing by itself. In two elegant turns I brought the Citroën alongside and gave the signal. A broad face appeared from behind a curtain, gaped palely an instant and was gone. "Let's hope that's not Fräulein Müller," said I.

"It doesn't matter what she looks like," replied Pat.

The door opened. Praise be, it was not Fräulein Müller; it was the maid. Fräulein Müller, the owner of the house, appeared a minute later. A spruce old maiden lady with grey hair. She was wearing a high-necked black dress and a gold cross for a brooch. "Pull your stockings on, Pat, as a precaution," I whispered after one look at the brooch, and got out.

"I believe Herr Köster announced us already?" said I.

"Yes, he wired me you were coming." She looked me over thoroughly. "And how is Herr Köster?"

"Ach, quite well—-as that goes these days."

She nodded and resumed her scrutiny. "Have you known him long?"

Now for the cross-examination, thought I, and announced how long I had known Köster. She seemed satisfied. Pat came up. She had put on her stockings. Fräulein Müller's look became milder. Pat appeared to gain more favour than I.

"Have you room for us, then?" I asked.

"If Herr Köster telegraphs you have to have a room," declared Fräulein Müller looking at me rather disapprovingly. "You shall have my best room even," said she to Pat.

Pat smiled. Fräulein Müller smiled also. "I'll show it to you," said she.

The two set off down a narrow path that led through a little garden. I trotted along behind and seemed to be rather superfluous, for Fräulein Müller addressed herself only to Pat.

The room she showed us was on the ground floor. It had an entrance of its own on to the garden. I liked it very much. It was fairly large, bright and friendly. On one side, in a sort of niche, stood two beds.

"Well?" asked Fräulein Müller.

"Perfectly lovely," said Pat.

"Magnificent, in fact," I added ingratiatingly. "And where is the other?"

Fräulein Müller turned on me slowly. "The other? What other? Do you want another then? Aren't you satisfied with this one?"

"It's simply splendid," said I, "but—"

"But?" said Fräulein Müller a trifle sharply. "Unfortunately I have none better than this."

I was about to explain that we needed two single rooms when she added: "But your wife thinks it very nice."

Your wife—I had the sensation of stepping two paces backwards. But I was still where I stood. I stole a look at Pat, who was leaning by the window, with difficulty suppressing a laugh at seeing me there. "My wife, certainly—" said I fixing my eye on the golden cross on Fräulein Müller's neck. There was nothing for it; I dare not explain. She would scream and fall in a faint. "Only we are accustomed to sleep in two rooms," said I. "Each in one, I mean."

Deprecatingly Fräulein Müller shook her head. "Two bedrooms, when you are married—that is a new fashion surely."

"Not at all," said I before she should become suspicious. "Only my wife is a very light sleeper. And unfortunately I snore rather loudly."

"Ach, so, you snore," replied Fräulein Müller, as if she might have guessed it long ago.

I was afraid she might now give me a room on the floor above, but marriage was evidently sacred to her. She opened the door to a little room alongside, in which was nothing much but a bed.

"Excellent," said I, "that would be perfect. But I won't be disturbing anyone else?" I wanted to find out whether we had the floor here to ourselves.

"You will disturb nobody," announced Fräulein Müller, her dignity falling from her. "Apart from yourselves there's not a soul here. The other rooms are all empty." She stood a moment, then pulled herself together. "Will you eat here or in the dining room?"

"Here," said I.

She nodded and went.

"Well, Frau Lohkamp," said I to Pat. "That's fixed us. . .But I would never have guessed the devil was such a churchman. She doesn't seem to like me, does she? Queer that, I usually have luck with old dames."

"That wasn't an old dame, Robby. That was a very nice old maid."

"Nice?" I gave a shrug. "Well, she has her nerve with her—so high and mighty and not a soul in the house!"

"She wasn't high and mighty at all."

"Not to you."

Pat laughed. "I like her. But now shouldn't we fetch the trunks and unpack the bathing things?"

I had been swimming an hour and was now lying on the beach in the sun. Pat was still in the water. Her white cap kept appearing in the blue swell of the waves. Some gulls were circling overhead. On the skyline a steamer moved slowly by with a trailing streamer of smoke.

The sun was blazing. It melted every resistance to sleepy thoughtless abandonment. I closed my eyes and stretched full-length. The hot sand crackled. The breaking of the feeble surf rustled in my ears. It reminded me of something, of another day when I had laid just like this. . . .

It was summer, 1917. Our company was in Flanders at the time and we had got unexpectedly a few days leave to Ostend—Meyer, Holthoff, Bryer, Lütgens, myself and some others. Most of us had never seen the sea before, and these few days—this almost unbelievable interlude between death and death—became one complete surrender to sun and sand and sea. We spent all day on the beach, we stretched our naked bodies in the sun—for merely to be naked, not laden with pack, rifle and uniform, was already almost peace. We raced up and down the sands and dashed again into the water; we were conscious of our limbs, our breath, our movements, with all the vigour and intensity that the things of life had at that time—for those hours we forgot everything, and we wanted to forget. But at night, in the twilight, when the sun was gone and grey shadows from the skyline ran in over the pallid waters, then gradually there mingled with the roar of the surf another tone, which grew louder and finally drowned it—a dull, menacing sound: the bombardment of the Front. Then it would happen suddenly that a livid silence would interrupt the talk, heads would lift and listen, and out of the merry faces of tired, played-out schoolboys would swiftly leap the hard visages of the soldiers, for an instant touched by a surprise, a sadness in which was implicit all that would never be uttered—courage and bitterness and greed of life, the will to duty, the despair, the hope and the enigmatic sorrow of those appointed early to die. Then, a few days later, began the great Offensive, and

already by the third of July the company had only thirty-two men, and Meyer, Holthoff and Lütgens were dead. . . .

"Robby!"called Pat.

I opened my eyes. For a moment I had to think where I was. Always when memories of the war came, one was immediately far away. With other memories it was not so.

I sat up. Pat was coming out of the water. She walked almost directly out of the path of the sun over the water, an immense glory poured over her shoulders, and she was so flooded in light that she appeared almost dark against it. With every step up the beach she mounted higher into the strong light until the sun of the late evening stood behind her head like a halo.

I jumped up, so unreal, so much as if out of another world did this picture appear to me now—the wide, blue sky, the white lines of foam, and the lovely slender figure against it—as if I alone were in the world and out of the water came stepping the first woman. For one instant I felt the immense, quiet power of beauty, and knew that it was stronger than all the bloodstained past; that it must be stronger, else the world would collapse, sink down and perish in its own chaos. And more even than that I felt that I was there, simply there, and that Pat was there, that I lived, that I had escaped the horror, that I had eyes and hands and thoughts and hot pulsing blood, and that all that was a miracle beyond comprehension.

"Robby!" called Pat once again and waved.

I picked up her bathing wrap from the ground and went quickly toward her. "You have been much too long in the water," said I.

"I'm quite warm," she replied, out of breath.

I kissed her wet shoulder. "You must be more reasonable at the start."

She shook her head and looked at me radiantly. "I've been reasonable long enough."

"You think so?"

"Of course. Much too long. I mean now to be unreasonable for a change."

She laughed and put her wet cheek to my face. "We're going to be unreasonable, Robby. To think of nothing, absolutely nothing, only of ourselves and the sun and the holidays and the sea."

"Right," said I taking the towel. "But first I'm going to rub you dry. Where have you been, though, to be so brown already?"

She pulled on her wrap. "That comes from my reasonable year, when I

had to lie on the balcony in the sun for an hour every day. And go to sleep at eight o'clock at night. Tonight at eight o'clock I'm going for a swim again."

"We shall see about that," said I. "Man is always large in his intentions. In execution not so. Therein lies his charm."

Nothing came of the evening bathe. We had a walk to the village and a drive in the Citroën through the dusk— then Pat became suddenly tired and wanted to go home. I had already noticed that often with her—the swift lapsing from radiant vitality into sudden exhaustion. She had little strength and no reserve at all—and yet she did not give that impression. She always used every ounce of life force that was in her and appeared inexhaustible in her lithe youthfulness; then suddenly would come a moment when her face would grow pale and her eyes deep with shadows "—then she was done. She did not become tired gradually, but in one second.

"Let us drive home, Robby," said she, and her dark voice was deeper even than usual.

"Home? To Fräulein Müller with the gold cross on her bosom? Who knows what the old devil may not have thought up in the meantime?"

"Home, Robby," said Pat and leaned wearily against my shoulder. "It is home for us."

I took one hand from the wheel and put it around her shoulders. And so we drove slowly through the blue, misty twilight, and when at last we did sight the lighted windows of the little house, snuggled down in the hollow of the valley like some dark animal, there actually was something like homecoming about it.

Fräulein Müller was already expecting us. She had changed her clothes and was now wearing instead of the black, woollen dress a black silk one of the same puritanical cut. And instead of the cross an emblem consisting of heart, anchor and cross in one—the ecclesiastical symbol of faith, hope, and love.

She was definitely more friendly than this afternoon and asked if she had done rightly in preparing for supper eggs, cold meat, and smoked fish.

"I suppose so," said I.

"Don't you like it? They are quite fresh smoked flounders." She looked at me rather anxiously.

"Of course," said I coldly.

"Fresh smoked flounders sound wonderful," declared Pat, looking at me reproachfully. "A perfect supper, just what one would wish for the first day at the sea, Fräulein Müller. And if there were some good hot tea with it—"

"Yes, certainly. Real hot tea. Gladly. I'll have it all brought at once." Relieved, Fräulein Müller rustled out hastily in her silk gown.

"Don't you really like fish?" asked Pat.

"Do I not? And flounders! I've been dreaming of them for days."

"Then why did you behave like that? That is a bit steep!"

"I had to pay her back for her reception this afternoon, didn't I?"

"Well I'm blowed!" Pat laughed. "Don't you ever let anyone off? I had forgotten that long ago."

"I hadn't," said I. "I don't forget so lightly."

"Then you ought to," replied Pat.

The maid came with the tray. The flounders had skins like yellow topazes and smelt wonderfully of the sea and smoke. There were fresh prawns as well.

"I begin to forget," said I enthusiastically. "I observe besides that I have an enormous hunger."

"So have I. But first give me, quickly, some hot tea. It is queer, but I am freezing. Yet it is quite warm still outside."

I looked at her. She was pale, although she smiled.

"I don't say one word, mark you, about too long bathing," said I, and asked the maid: "Have you any rum?"

"What?"

"Rum. A drink out of a bottle."

"Rum?"

"Yes."

"Eh?"

She gaped with her doughy, full moon face.

"Eh?" said she, once again.

"Good" I replied. "Never mind. Good-bye. God bless you."

She vanished. "What a mercy, Pat, we have far-sighted friends," said I. "Lenz hastily stowed a pretty heavy parcel into the car this morning as we were leaving. Let's have a look what's in it."

I fetched the parcel from the car. It was a small case with two bottles of rum, one bottle of cognac and one of port. I held them up. "St. James rum, too! You can trust the boys."

I uncorked the bottles and poured Pat a good dose into the tea. As I did so I saw that her hands were trembling. "Are you really as cold as all that?" I asked.

"It's only momentary. It's better already. The rum is good. But I'll go to bed soon."

"Go at once, Pat," said I. "Then we can push up the table and eat that way."

She let herself be persuaded. I brought her an extra blanket from my bed and pushed the table into position. "Perhaps you would like a real grog, Pat? That is better still. I can make one quite quickly."

She shook her head. "I feel well again already."

I glanced at her. She actually did look better. Her eyes had their shine again, her lips were very red and her skin glowed softly.

"Incredible how quick it goes," said I. "That's the rum, sure."

She smiled. "It is the bed, too, Robby. I recover much better in bed. That is my refuge."

"Extraordinary. I would go mad if I had to go to bed as early. Alone, I mean."

She laughed. "For a woman it is different."

"Don't say for a woman. You are not a woman."

"What am I then?"

"I don't know. But not a woman. If you were a proper, normal woman, I would not be able to love you."

She looked at me. "Can you love, anyway?"

"Well," said I, "that's a nice one at suppertime. Have you got any more questions like that?"

"Perhaps. But what about this one?"

I poured myself a glass of rum. *"Pros't,* Pat! Maybe you are right. Perhaps none of us can. Not as they used to, I mean. But it's none the worse for that. Only different. We don't see it that way any more."

There was a knock. Fräulein Müller came in. She had in her hand a tiny glass jug in which a drop of fluid was swilling here and there. "I have brought you the rum."

"Thanks," said I deeply touched and contemplating the glass finger-stall. "It is very kind of you, but we have helped ourselves already."

"Good gracious!" Horrified, she gazed at the four bottles on the table. "Do you drink all that?"

"Only as medicine," I replied gently avoiding Pat's eye. "On Doctor's orders. I have a too dry liver, Fräulein Müller. But won't you give us the honour?"

I opened the port bottle. "To your very good health! May the house soon be full of guests."

"Thank you very much." She sighed, made a little bow and sipped like a bird. "A good holiday!" Then she smiled at me knowingly. "But it is strong. And good."

My glass almost dropped out of my hand at this transformation. Fräulein Müller's cheeks began to glow, her eyes sparkled and she started telling us all manner of things that did not interest us in the least. Pat had an angel's patience with her. Finally Fräulein turned to me.

"Herr Köster is doing well then?"

I nodded.

"He used to be always so quiet," said she. "Sometimes he would not say a word all day. Does he still do that?"

"Well, he does talk occasionally now."

"He was almost a year here. Quite alone—"

"Yes," said I. "One is apt to talk less then."

She nodded solemnly and looked across at Pat. "I'm sure you are tired."

"A little," said Pat.

"Very," I added.

"Then of course I will be going," she replied, startled.

"Good night, then. Sleep well."

Reluctantly she went.

"I believe she would like to have stayed longer," said I. "Funny, all of a sudden, what?"

"The poor thing," replied Pat. "Sits alone in her room every night, I'm sure, worrying."

"Ach, so, yes—" said I. "But I do think, all in all, I behaved quite nicely to her."

"You did so." She stroked my hand. "Open the door a bit, Robby."

I went and opened the door. Outside it had become clearer and a patch of moonlight fell across the path and into the room. It was as if the garden had only been waiting for the door to be opened—so strong was the night perfume of the flowers that immediately pressed in, the sweet smell of wallflower, mignonette and roses. It filled the whole room.

"Just look," said I, pointing.

In the increasing moonlight one could see the entire length of the garden path. The flowers stood with drooping heads along the edge, the leaves were the colour of oxidized silver, and the blossoms that had shone so bravely in the daylight, now shimmered, ghostly and tender, in soft pastel shades. Night and the moonlight had stolen the strength from their colours—but to compensate their perfume was fuller and sweeter than ever by day.

I looked across at Pat. Tender and fine and frail her head lay with its dark hair on the white pillow. She had not much strength—but she too had the mystery of frailness, the mystery of flowers in the twilight and in the hovering light of the moon.

She sat up a little. "I am really very tired, Robby. Is that bad?"

I sat down on the bed beside her. "Not at all. You will sleep well."

"But you don't want to sleep yet?"

"I'll take a turn first along the beach."

She nodded and lay back again. I continued to sit awhile.

"Leave the door open overnight," said she, drunk with sleep. "Then it will be like sleeping in the garden."

Her breathing became deeper and I got up softly and went out into the garden. I stood by the wooden fence and smoked a cigarette. From here I could see into the room. Pat's bathing gown was hanging over a chair, her dress and some underclothes were flung across it, and on the floor in front of the chair, stood her shoes. One was tipped over. I had an extraordinary sense of home as I saw that, and thought that now at last someone was there and would be there, that I only had to take a few steps to see her and be with her, to-day, to-morrow, and for a long time to come, perhaps—

Perhaps, thought I, *perhaps*—always that word, one never could escape it. It was certainty we lacked, certainty that everyone and everything lacked.

I went down to the beach, to the sea and the wind, to the hollow booming that echoed like a distant bombardment.

Chapter XVI

I was sitting on the beach, watching the sun go down. Pat had not come. She had not been well all day.

It grew darker and I rose to go home. As I did I saw through the trees the maid coming towards me. She was signalling and shouting something. I did not understand; the wind and the sea were too loud. I waved back that she should stay where she was; I would be there in a minute. But she continued to run, her hands to her mouth.

"Wife . . ." I heard. "Quick . . ."

I ran. "What's the matter?"

She was panting for breath. "Quick . . . wife . . . accident . . ."

I tore along the sandy track through the wood to the house. The wooden gate into the garden was jammed; I sprang over it and burst into the room. There lay Pat, blood all over her chest, fists clenched, blood running from her mouth. Beside her stood Fräulein Müller with cloths and a basin of water.

"What is it?" I cried, pushing her aside.

She said something. "Bring some bandages!" I cried. "Where's the wound?"

She looked at me with trembling lips. "There is no wound . . ."

I straightened. "A haemorrhage," said she.

I felt as if I had been struck with a hammer. "A haemorrhage!" I got up and took the basin of water from her hand. "Bring some ice, quickly, some ice."

I dipped the towel in the basin, and laid it on Pat's chest.

"We haven't any ice in the house," said Fräulein Müller.

I swung round. She stepped back. "Ice, damn you! Send to the nearest pub. And telephone at once for a doctor."

"But we have no telephone . . ."

"Hell! Where is the nearest telephone?"

"At Massmann's."

"Go. Quick! Run! Telephone the nearest doctor. What is his name? Where does he live?"

Before she could answer I had pushed her out. "Quick, quick, run, as quick as you can. How far is it?"

"Three minutes," said the woman and hurried out.

"Bring some ice with you," I called after her.

She nodded and ran.

I fetched more water and dipped the towel again. I did not dare to disturb Pat. I did not know whether she was lying properly or not; I was desperate because I did not know the one thing I ought to have known—whether to put pillows under her head, or lie her flat.

She choked, then lifted herself and a shot of blood welled from her mouth. Her breath came high and wailing, her eyes were filled with terror, she swallowed and choked and coughed, and again the blood spouted. I held her tight, passing an arm under her shoulders. I felt the quaking of her poor, tortured back—it seemed to last endlessly. Then she fell back limp . . .

Fräulein Müller came in. She looked at me like a ghost.

"What must we do?" I shouted.

"The doctor's coming at once," she whispered. "Ice . . . on her chest—and in her mouth, if you can . . ."

"Sit her up or lie her down? My God, can't you talk a bit quicker?"

"As she is, let her lie—he's coming at once."

I packed pieces of ice on Pat's chest, relieved at last to have something to do. I broke the ice up small for compresses and put them on, and all the time saw only the sweet, dear, tortured lips, the lips, the bleeding lips . . .

There, the rattle of a motor-bike. I jumped up. The doctor.

"Can I help?" I asked. He shook his head and unpacked his case. I stood at the bed beside him, gripping the posts. He looked up. I stepped back, strll keeping my eye upon him. He looked at Pat's ribs. Pat groaned.

"Is it dangerous?" I asked.

"Where was your wife being treated?" he replied.

"What? Treated?" I stammered.

"What doctor?" he asked impatiently.

"I don't know . . ." I answered. "No, I know nothing . . . I don't believe . . ."

He looked at me. "But you must know."

"But I don't know. She never said anything about it to me."

He bent over Pat and asked. She tried to answer. But again the red coughing broke through. The doctor lifted her. She bit the air and drew a long piping breath.

"Jaffé," she gasped, gurgling.

"Felix Jaffé? Professor Felix Jaffé?" asked the doctor. She nodded with her eyes. He turned to me. "Could you telephone him? It would be as well to ask him."

"Yes, yes," I replied. "At once. Then I'll fetch you . . . Jaffé?"

"Felix Jaffé," said the doctor. "Ask the exchange the number."

"Will she come through?" I still asked.

"She must stop bleeding," said the doctor.

I found the maid and set off down the path. She pointed out the house with the telephone. I ran on and knocked at the door. A small company of people was sitting over coffee and beer. I took them in with one swift glance and could not understand that people could drink beer while Pat was bleeding. I put through an urgent call and waited by the instrument. As I listened into the humming darkness, I saw with strange vividness over the glass top of the door part of the other room. I saw a bald head bobbing to and fro, yellow under the light; I saw a brooch on the black taffeta of a tight-laced dress, a double chin with a pair of pince-nez and a towering bun of hair—a bony old hand with thick veins drumming on the table . . . I wanted not to see, but I could not help it; it bored into my eyes like a too strong light.

At last the number answered. I asked for the professor. "I'm sorry," said, the nurse. "Professor Jaffé is out."

My heart stopped, then pounded again like a sledge-hammer. "Where is he? I must speak to him at once."

"I don't know. He may have gone to the clinic."

"Please telephone the clinic. I'll wait. You have a second telephone, of course?"

"One moment." The roar began again, the bottomless darkness, over it the thin swinging metal thread. I gave a startled jump. In a covered cage beside me a canary chirped. The sister's voice came again. "Professor Jaffé has already left the clinic."

"Where for?"

"I really can't say, sir."

Beaten. I leaned against the wall.

"Hello!" said the sister. "Are you there?"

"Yes. Listen, nurse—you don't know when he will be back?"

"That is quite uncertain."

"Surely he says before he goes out? He must surely! In case anything should happen, surely it must be possible to get in touch with him?"

"There is a doctor at the clinic."

"Would you . . . no, that wouldn't help, he wouldn't know. . . . All right, nurse," said I, dead-tired. "When Professor Jaffé does come in, ask him to ring here at once, urgently." I told her the number. "But most urgently, nurse, please. A matter of life and death."

"You can rely on that, sir." She repeated the number and rang off.

I stood there, alone. The swaying heads, the bald pate, the brooch, the other room, all so much shiny rubber, very far away. I looked about. There was nothing more I could do here. Only tell the people to fetch me if a call should come. But I could not make up my mind to leave the telephone. It was like letting go of a life belt. Then all at once I had it. I took up the receiver again and asked for Köster's number. He must be there. It was simply not possible that he was not there.

And there it came, out of the tumult of the night, Köster's quiet voice. And I myself became calm at once, and told him everything. I was aware of his making notes.

"Right," said he. "I'll go at once and find him. I'll ring again. Don't worry, I'll find him."

Pat? The world stood still. The spell was broken. I ran back.

"Well?" asked the doctor, "did you get him?"

"No," said I, "but I got Köster."

"Köster? Never heard of him. What did he say? What's his treatment?"

"Treatment? He isn't treating her. He's looking for him."

"For whom?"

"Jaffé."

"God in heaven—who is this Köster, then?"

"Ach, so—pardon! Köster is my friend. He is looking for Professor Jaffé. I couldn't get hold of him."

"That's a pity," said the doctor, turning again to Pat.

"He'll find him," said I. "If he isn't dead, he'll find him."

The doctor looked at me as if I were crazed, then gave a shrug.

The light of the lamp brooded in the room. I asked if I could help. The doctor shook his head. I stared out of the window. Pat choked. I shut the window and took up my stand in the doorway. I kept an eye on the path.

All at once I heard a shout. "Telephone!"

I swung round. "Telephone! Shall I go?"

The doctor jumped up. "No, I'll go. I'll be better able to ask him. You

stay here. Don't do anything. I'll be back in a minute."

I sat on the bed beside Pat. "Pat," said I softly, "we are here. We will see to it! No harm will come to you. No harm dare come to you. The professor is talking now. He'll tell us what to do. He's coming to-morrow himself, we've fixed that. He will help you. You will soon be better. Why did you never tell me that you were ill? A little bit of blood doesn't count, Pat. We will give it to you again. Köster has found the professor, Pat. Now we'll be all right."

The doctor came back. "It wasn't the professor."

I stood up.

"It was a friend of yours—Lenz."

"Köster hasn't found him?"

"Yes. Jaffé gave him the instructions. Your friend Lenz telephoned them to me. Quite clear and correct, too. Is your friend a doctor?"

"No. He wanted to be. And Köster?"

The doctor looked at me. "Lenz said to tell you Köster had left a few minutes before. With the professor. He would be here in two hours."

I leant against the bed. "Otto," said I.

"Yes," said the doctor, "that was the one point he was wrong on. I know the road. At the quickest they'll need over three hours. All the same. . . ."

"If he said two hours, then you can be sure, doctor, he'll be here in two hours."

"I tell you it's not possible. The road's nothing but bends, and besides it's dark."

"You wait," said I.

"All the same . . . if he could get here . . . It is good he is coming." ,

At last I could stand it no longer. I went into the open. Outside it had turned misty. The sea was booming in the distance. Moisture dripped from the trees. I looked about me. I was no longer alone. To the south beyond the horizon somewhere an engine was whining. Beyond the mist help was racing over the pallid roads, headlamps spouting light, tyres whistling and two hands holding the wheel in an iron grip, two eyes boring into the darkness, cold, sure—the eyes of my comrade. . .

I learned afterwards from Jaffé how it had been.

Immediately, upon my call, Köster had rung Lenz and told him to hold himself in readiness. Then he had got Karl and with Lenz raced to Jaffé's clinic. The nurse on duty there thought the professor had gone out for supper. She gave Köster the names of a few likely places. Köster set off. He ignored

all traffic signals—he took no heed of gesticulating policemen. He steered the car through the traffic like a runaway horse. At the fourth restaurant he found the professor. Jaffé "remembered at once. He left his meal unfinished and came. They drove to his house for the necessary things. And this was the only stretch where Köster drove merely fast, and did not race. He did not want to alarm the doctor beforehand. On the way Jaffé asked where Pat was. Köster named a place some forty kilometres out. He meant to get the professor into the car first. The rest would take care of itself. While packing his case Jaffé gave Lenz instructions as to what he should telephone. Then he got in with Köster.

"Is it dangerous?" asked Köster.

"Yes," said Jaffé.

From that moment Karl was transformed into a flying white ghost. With a bound he leapt from the start and swept away. He forced a way through, rode with two wheels on the footway, dashed contrariwise up one-way streets, seeking the shortest way out of the city.

"Are you crazy?" shouted the professor as Köster shot out from under the high fenders of a bus, slackened an instant, then let the engine roar again.

"Drive slower," bawled the professor, "what good will it do if we have an accident?"

"We won't have an accident."

"We will, inside two minutes, if you go on driving like this."

Köster swung the car to the left past an electric tram. "We won't!" He now had to negotiate a long street. He looked at the doctor. "I know I must get you there safely. You leave the rest to me."

"But what's the point of racing? You'll only save a few minutes."

"No," said Köster, dodging a lorry laden with ballast; "we have still two hundred and forty kilometres."

"What?"

"Yes . . ." The car darted between a mail van and a motorbus. . . . "I didn't want to tell you before."

"It would have made no difference," growled Jaffé. "I don't reckon my services by kilometres. Drive to the railway station. It will be quicker by train."

"No." Köster had reached the suburbs. The wind snatched the words from his mouth. "Asked about that already—train leaves too late." He looked at Jaffé again.

The doctor probably saw something in his face. "Is she your girl?" he shouted.

Köster shook his head. He answered no more questions. He had now left the allotment gardens behind and was entering the open country. The car was travelling at top speed. The doctor huddled down behind the narrow windscreen.Köster passed him his leather helmet.

The horn bayed unceasingly. The woods flung back the cry. Köster slowed up in villages only when there was nothing else for it. Behind the thunderous echo of the un-throttled explosions the rows of houses flapped like a shadow line of washing, the car swept through them, plucked them an instant into the livid glare of the headlights and with its beam before it devoured its way farther into the night.

The tyres began to snarl, to hiss, to whine, to whistle; the engine was giving all that was in it. Köster lay, his whole being intent on what was ahead, his body one mighty ear, a filter sifting the thunder and the whistling for every tiniest other noise, for every suspicious purr or knock or drag that might mean a puncture and death.

The road became wet. On one clayey stretch the car skidded and hurtled sideways. Köster was compelled to slacken speed. Afterwards, to make up, he took the corners still more sharply. He was driving no longer with his head, but by instinct. The headlights showed up the bend in two halves; the moment of the actual turn was black and blind. Köster helped himself out with the spotlight, but the beam was narrow.

The doctor was silent.

All at once the air glistened in the line of the headlamps; the beam coloured—a pale silver, a cloudy veil. That was the only time Jaffé heard Köster swear. A minute later they were in thick fog.

Köster dipped the lights. They were now swimming through cotton wool, shadows drove silently by, trees, phantoms in a milky sea; there was no road any more, only guesswork and luck, shadows that loomed and dwindled to the accompanying roar of the engine.

After ten minutes, when they came out of it, Köster's face was haggard. He looked at Jaffé and murmured something. Then at full speed he drove on, crouching, cold and self-possessed once more. . .

The sticky warmth weighted in the room like lead.

"Has it stopped yet?" I asked.

"No," said the doctor.

Pat looked at me. I smiled. It fixed in a grimace. "Half an hour more," said I.

The doctor looked at his watch. "An hour and a half, if not two. It's raining."

The drops were rustling lightly down among the leaves and shrubs of the garden. I peered into the dark with blinded eyes. How long ago was it since we had got up, Pat and I, in the night and gone out into the garden and sat among the stocks and wallflowers and Pat had hummed children's lullabies? How long since the moon shone so white on the pathway and Pat, like a lithe animal, ran down it between the bushes?

For the hundredth time I went to the door. I knew it was useless; but it shortened the waiting. The air was misty. I cursed; I knew what that would mean for Köster. A bird cried out of the darkness.

"Shut up," I growled. *Bird of ill omen!* it flashed through my mind. "Rubbish," said I aloud. A beetle was droning somewhere—but it did not come nearer—it did not come nearer. It kept up an even, steady hum; now it stopped— now it was there again—and again. I suddenly trembled. That wasn't a beetle; that was a car a long way off, going into the curves at top speed. I stood stock-still—I held my breath and opened my mouth to hear better. Again . . . again . . . the light, high-pitched buzzing, as of an angry wasp . . . And now, stronger, I could clearly detect the sound of the compressor—then the sky line, stretched to breaking-point, suddenly broke into a soft infinity, burying under it might and fear and terror. . . .

I ran back to the house. Supporting myself in the doorway, "They're coming!" I said. "Doctor, Pat, they're coming! I can hear them already!"

The doctor had treated me as if I were half-crazed the whole evening. He came too and listened. "It'll be some other car," said he at last.

"No, I know the engine."

He looked at me irritably. He thought himself something of a car fan, apparently. With Pat he was patient and thoughtful as a mother; but when I mentioned cars he would glare at me through his spectacles and know better. "Impossible," said he shortly and went inside again.

I remained outside. I was trembling with excitement. "Karl! Karl!" said I. Muffled sounds, whining sounds in quick succession—the car must be in the village, going at breakneck speed between the houses. The whine grew

fainter; it was behind the wood—and now it swelled again, racing, triumphant—a bright beam swept through the mist: the headlights; a roar like thunder . . . Incredulous, the doctor was beside me. Suddenly the full piercing light quite blinded us and with a scream of brakes the car pulled up at the garden gate.

I ran towards it. The professor stepped out at once. He took no notice of me, but went straight to the doctor. After him came Köster.

"How is she?" said he.

"Still bleeding."

"She'll be all right now," said he. "You. don't need to worry now."

I said nothing, just looked at him . . .

"Have you a cigarette?" he asked.

I gave him one. "It was good of you to come, Otto."

He smoked in long pulls. "I thought it might be as well."

"You must have driven fast."

"Not so bad. Only one patch of fog."

We sat down side by side on the garden seat and waited.

"Do you think she'll come through?"

"Of course she will. A haemorrhage isn't dangerous."

"She never told me a word about it."

Köster nodded.

"She must come through, Otto," said I.

He did not look up. "Give us another cigarette," said he, "I forgot to put mine in."

"She must come through," said I, "else all is filth."

The professor came out. I stood up. "Damn me if I ever ride with you again," said he to Köster.

"Sorry," said he, "but she's my friend's wife."

"So?" said Jaffé, looking at me.

"Is she safe?" I asked.

He looked at me coldly. I shifted my gaze.

"Do you think I'd be standing here, if she wasn't?"

I bit my lip. I clenched my fists. My eyes filled with tears.

"I beg your pardon," said I, "but you've been so quick."

"That sort of thing can't be quick enough," said Jaffé, smiling.

"I can't help worrying, Otto," said I.

He took me by the shoulders, turned me about, and gave me a gentle push toward the door. "If the professor allows it?"

"I'm right now," said I. "Can I go in?"

"Very well, but no talking," replied Jaffé. "And only for a moment. She must not be excited."

I could see only a haze of light swimming in water. I blinked. The light danced and sparkled. I did not dare to wipe my eyes lest Pat should think I was crying because things were so bad. I ventured only a smile into the room. Then I turned quickly away.

"Was it right to bring you?" Köster asked the professor.

"It was as well," said Jaffé.

"I can take you back first thing in the morning."

"I'd sooner not," said Jaffé.

"I'll drive reasonably this time, of course."

"I think I'll stay here the day just to keep an eye on things.. Is your bed available?" he asked me. I nodded.

"Good. Then I'll sleep here. Can you get put up in the village?"

"Yes. Shall I get you a toothbrush and pyjamas?"

"Not necessary. I have everything. I am always prepared for emergencies—if not exactly for racing."

"I apologise," said Köster. "I don't wonder if you are annoyed."

"I'm not," said Jaffé.

"Then I'm sorry I didn't tell you the truth at once."

Jaffé laughed. "You have a poor opinion of doctors. Well, off you go. I'll stay here."

I hastily assembled a few things for Köster and myself. We walked in to the village.

"Are you tired?" I asked.

"No," said he. "Let us sit awhile somewhere."

After an hour I began to get restive. "If he stays, then it must be dangerous, Otto," said I. "Why should he else.

"I guess it's just a precaution," answered Köster. "He is very fond of Pat. He told me so, as we were coming. He attended her mother, too."

"Did she . . ."

"I don't know," said Köster quickly. "May have been something quite different. Feel like sleep yet?"

"You go, Otto. I'd like just once more . . . You know, from a distance . . ."

"Right. I'll come with you."

"Listen, Otto. Don't you trouble—I like sleeping out— in warm weather.

I've dofte quite a bit of it lately."

"It's pretty wet."

"That's nothing. I'll put up Karl's hood and sit there awhile."

"Very good. I rather like sleeping out myself."

I saw there was no getting rid of him. We gathered up a few blankets and cushions and went back to Karl. We unlashed the cover and pushed back the seats. One could lie quite comfortably so.

"Better than at the Front sometimes," said Köster.

The bright patch of window glowed in the misty air. From time to time I saw Jaffé's shadow move across it. We smoked a packet of cigarettes. At last the light was turned out and only the little night-light still burned.

"Thank God," said I.

The rain trickled off the hood. A slight breeze was blowing. It turned cooler. "You can have my blanket if you like, Otto," said I.

"No—what do you think? I'm warm enough."

"Good sport, Jaffé, eh?"

"Yes. Clever, too, I believe."

"Sure."

I sat bolt upright out of a restless half-sleep. It was grey and cold outside. Köster was already awake.

"Haven't you slept, Otto?"

"Yes."

I climbed out of the car and went stealthily down the garden path to the window. The little night-light was still burning. I saw Pat lying in bed with closed eyes. For a moment I was afraid she was dead. Then I saw her right hand move. She was very pale. But she was not bleeding any more. Then again she made the same movement. At the same moment Jaff6, who was in my bed, opened bis eyes. I stepped back. I was reassured; he knew his job.

"I think we ought to shove off, Otto," said I to Köster; "he mustn't see we have been keeping a check on him."

"All in order inside?" asked Otto.

"So far as one can see. He has the right sleep, the professor. Sleeps through a bombardment, but wakes if a mouse nibbles at his haversack."

"What do you say to a swim?" said Köster. "Wonderful air here." He stretched himself.

"You go," said I.

"Come on," he insisted.

The grey sky parted. Streaks of orange-red light poured through. The curtain of cloud lifted along the horizon, and beyond showed a clear apple-green.

We sprang into the water and swam. The sea was grey and red.

Then we went back. Fräulein Müller was already up. She was picking parsley in the garden. She started when I spoke to her. Rather awkwardly I tried to apologise if I had perhaps sworn overmuch yesterday.

She started to cry. "Poor lady. So beautiful, and so young."

"She's going to live to a hundred," said I, vexed that she should weep as if Pat were going to die. Pat wasn't going to die. The cool morning, the quick sea-whipped life in me, told me so; Pat could not die. She could die only if I lost heart. Köster was here—I was here: Pat's comrades . . . we would die first. As long as we lived, she would pull through. It had been before. While Köster lived, I did not die. And so while we two lived, Pat could not die.

"One must submit to fate," said the old woman, and looked at me rather reproachfully out of her brown, wrinkled baked-apple face. She meant my cursing, apparently.

"Submit?" said I. "Why submit? Small good that will do. Everything in life has to be paid for, twice, thrice over. Then why submit?"

"Yes, yes—it is the best."

Submit! thought I. A lot that would help. Fight, fight, was the only thing in this struggle, where one would go under in the end anyway. Fight for the little that one loved. At seventy one might begin to think about submitting.

Köster spoke to her. Soon she was smiling again and asking him what he would like for lunch.

"You see," said Otto. "That's the gift of age. Tears and laughter—quick changes. No resentments. Something one might well learn," he observed meditatively.

We took a turn round the house. "Every minute she can sleep is to the good," said I. We came back into the garden. Fräulein Müller had spread the breakfast. We drank hot black coffee. The sun came up, and at once it was warm. The leaves of the trees glistened with the light and the wet. From the sea came the cry of the gulls.

Fräulein Müller placed a bunch of roses on the table. "We will give them to her afterwards," said she. The roses were fragrant of childhood and garden walls.

"Do you know, Otto," said I, "I feel as if I had been ill myself . . . I'm not

the man I used to be. I ought to have been calmer. Cooler. The calmer a man is the more help he can be."

"One can't always be so, Bob. I have had times myself. The longer one lives the more fearful one gets. It's like a gambler who is always having new losses."

The door opened. Jaffé came out in his pyjamas. "It's all right, all right," he signalled as he saw me about to overturn the breakfast table. "As right as can be expected."

"Can I go in?"

"Not yet. The maid's there now. Washing and all that."

I poured him some coffee. He blinked in the sunlight and turned to Köster. "I ought to be grateful to you really. It has at least given me one day in the country."

"But you could do it often," said Köster. "Leave one evening and return the next."

"Could, could," answered Jaffé. "Haven't you ever observed how we live in an age of self-persecution? What a lot of things there are one might do that one doesn't—and yet why, God only knows. Work has become so tremendously important to-day, because so many have none, I suppose, that it kills everything else. How lovely it is here! Yet it's years since I have seen it. I have two cars, a ten-roomed house and money to burn . . . and what do I do with it? What is it all to this summer morning in the country? Work, work, work . . . an abominable obsession—and always under the illusion it will be different later. And it never is different. Queer, isn't it, that anyone should do that with his life?"

"A doctor, it seems to me, is one of the few who do know what they are living for," said I. "Take a bank clerk, for instance."

"My dear friend," replied Jaffé, "it's a mistake to think that all men have the same tastes."

"Yes," said Köster. "But neither do men get jobs in accord with their tastes."

"True," replied Jaffé. "It's all very difficult." He nodded to me. "Now. But easy—no touching and no letting her talk. . . ."

She lay among the pillows, helpless, as one stricken. Her face had lost its colour; blue, deep shadows were under her eyes and her lips were pale. Only her eyes were big and shining. Too big and shining . . .

I took up her hand. It was cold and limp.

"Pat, old man," said I awkwardly and was about to sit down beside her when by the window I caught sight of the dough-faced maid staring at me inquisitively.

"Go, can't you?" said I with annoyance.

"I have to draw the curtains," she replied.

"Very well, do so then, and go."

She tugged the yellow curtains over the window. And still she did not go. She set about slowly fastening the curtains together with a pin.

"Look," said I, "this isn't a play. Hop it, quick."

She turned on me haughtily. "I'll go when I have pinned them—and not then perhaps."

"Did you ask her to do it?" I asked Pat.

She nodded.

"Does the light hurt you?" I asked.

She shook her head. "It's better you shouldn't see me too clearly to-day . . ."

"Pat," said I horrified, "you're not to talkl But if that's all. . . ."

I opened the door and the maid vanished at last. I went back. I was no longer disconcerted. I was even quite glad

for the maid; it had brought me safely over the first moment. For it was damnable business to see Pat lying there like that.

I sat beside the bed. "You'll be right again soon, Pat."

She moved her lips. "To-morrow, do you think?"

"Not to-morrow perhaps, but in a few days. Then you ought to be able to get up and we'll drive home. We shouldn't have come down here, the air is much too strong for you—"

"Yes," she whispered. "But I'm not sick, Robby. It was just an accident —"

I looked at her. Didn't she really know, then, that she was ill? Or did she not want to know? Her eyes moved restlessly to and fro. "You don't need to be afraid—" she whispered.

I did not understand what she meant at first and why it should be important that I particularly should not be afraid. I saw only that she was agitated, her eyes had a strangely , troubled, urgent expression. And suddenly a thought came to me. I knew what she was thinking: she imagined I was afraid of her because she was ill.

"Good gracious, Pat," said I, "is that the reason, perhaps, you never told

me anything?"

She did not answer, but I saw that that was it.

"Damn it all," said I; "what do you take me for, then?"

I stooped over her. "Now lie quite still a moment, but don't move." I kissed her. Her lips were dry and hot.

When I straightened up I saw that she was crying. She was crying soundlessly, with wide-open eyes, and her face did not move. The tears just welled out.

"For God's sake, Pat—"

"I'm so happy," said she.

I stood there and looked at her. It was only a word, but a word I had never heard said like that before. I had known women, but they had only been fleeting affairs, adventures, a gay hour occasionally, a lonely evening, escape from oneself, from despair, from vacancy. And I had never even wanted anything else, for I had learned that there is nothing else one can trust but oneself, and one's comrades perhaps. Now I suddenly saw that I could be something to someone, simply because I was there, and that that person was happy because I was with her. Said like that, it sounds very simple; but when you think about it, it is a tremendous thing, a thing that knows no end. It is something that can break and transform one. It is love and yet something more —something for which one can live. A man cannot live for love. But for a human being, perhaps . . .

I wanted to say something, but I could not. It is difficult to find words when one really has something to say. And even if one knows the right words, then one is ashamed to say them. All these words belong to other, earlier centuries. Our time has not the words yet to express its feelings. We can only be offhand—anything else rings false.

"Pat," said I, "brave old lad—"

At that moment Jaffé entered. He immediately took in the situation. "Nice behaviour," he growled. "I guessed something of the sort."

I was about to make some excuse, but he turned me out without more ado.

Chapter XVII

It was two weeks later. Pat had so far recovered that we could travel home. We had packed our things and were waiting for Gottfried Lenz. He was to collect the car. Pat and I were going by train.

It was a warm milky day. The clouds like cotton wool stood motionless in the sky, the hot air quivered above the dunes and the sea lay leaden in a bright shimmering haze.

Gottfried arrived after lunch. From afar I saw his fair head shining above the hedges. Not until he turned into the drive to Fräulein Müller's villa did I notice he was not alone—behind him appeared a miniature imitation racing motorist, an enormous checked cap put on with the peak to the back, immense dust goggles, a white overall and a couple of out-size, ruby-red, glowing ears.

"My hat, but it's Jupp!" said I in astonishment.

"The same, Herr Lohkamp," replied Jupp, grinning.

"And the rig! What's that for?"

"Did you ever see the like of it?" said Lenz delighted, shaking me by the hand. "He's being coached for a racer. Eight days now I've been giving him driving lessons. He begged me to let him come to-day. A good opportunity to make his first cross-country tour."

"Going to break the record, Herr Lohkamp," Judd assured me eagerly.

"And how he'll break it!" Gottfried smirked. "I've never seen the like of him for persecution mania. The first lesson he tried to overtake a Mercedes-Compressor in our good old taxi. A perfect little demon."

Jupp was perspiring with happiness and looked at Lenz adoringly.

"I thought I could eat the cheeky blighter, Herr Lenz. Meant to snap him up in the curve, like Herr Köster."

I could not help laughing. "You're starting well, Jupp."

Gottfried looked with paternal pride at his pupil. "First, you snap up that luggage and take it to the station."

"By myself?" Jupp almost exploded with excitement. "Can I drive the bit to the station quite by myself, Herr Lenz?"

Gottfried nodded and Jupp dashed into the house.

We passed up the trunks. Then we collected Pat and drove to the station.

We were a quarter of an hour too early when we got there. The platform was empty, only a few milk cans were standing about.

"You'd better push off," said I. "Otherwise you'll never get home."

Jupp at the wheel looked at me, offended.

"You resent such observations, eh?" Lenz asked him.

Jupp sat up. "I've reckoned it all out most carefully, Herr Lohkamp," said he reproachfully. "We will be in the workshop comfortably by eight."

"Quite right." Lenz patted him on the shoulder. "Offer to take him on in a bet. For a bottle of seltzer water."

"Not seltzer water," replied Jupp, "but I'll risk a packet of cigarettes any day."

He looked at me challengingly.

"I suppose you know the road is pretty bad?" I asked.

"All reckoned in, Herr Lohkamp."

"What about the corners, have you thought of them?"

"Corners mean nothing to me. I have no nerves."

"Good, Jupp," said I. "Then I take on the bet. But Herr Lenz mustn't drive on the way."

Jupp laid his hand on his heart. "My word of honour."

"Very good, very good. But say, what's that you've got there in your hand?"

"My stop watch. I'm going to time it as we go. Just like to see what the sleigh can do."

Lenz grinned. "Yes, boys, Jupp is fully armed. I dare say the jolly old Citroën is quivering in every cylinder al ready."

Jupp ignored the irony. He plucked excitedly at his cap. "Then we'll start, Herr Lenz, eh? A bet's a bet."

"Of course, you little compressor. *Au revoir*, Pat. See you later, Bob." Gottfried climbed into the seat. "Now, Jupp, show the lady how a cavalier and future ruler of the world starts."

Jupp adjusted the goggles over his eyes, waved like an old hand, and in first gear pulled out smartly over the curb onto the road.

Pat and I sat awhile on a seat in front of the station. The hot white sun lay full on the wooden wall that shut off the platform. There was a smell of resin and salt. Pat leaned

back her head and closed her eyes. She sat perfectly still, her face turned to the sun.

"Are you tired?" I asked.

She shook her head. "No, Robby."

"There comes the train," said I.

The engine came stamping along, black, little and forlorn against the quivering, great waste. We got in. The train was almost empty. It moved' off puffing. The smoke of the engine hung thick and black in the air. Slowly the landscape revolved past—the village with the brown thatched roofs, the meadows with cows and horses, the wood, and then, peaceful and sleepy in the hollow behind the dunes, Fräulein Müller's house.

"There is Fräulein Müller," said Pat.

"So she is."

She was standing at the front door waving. Pat took out her handkerchief and let it flutter from the window.

"She won't see that," said I, "it's too small and thin. Here, have mine."

She took it and waved. Fräulein Müller waved back vigorously.

The train gradually gained the open country. The house vanished and the dunes were left behind. Beyond the black strip of the wood the sea looked out from time to time—the glance of a watching tired eye. Then came the soft golden green of the fields and the ears of corn dipping in the gentle breeze to the horizon.

Pat gave me back my handkerchief and sat in a corner. I pulled up the window. That's over, thought I, thank God, that's over. It had been only a dream. A damned bad dream.

Shortly before six we reached the city. I took a taxi and loaded the luggage. Then we drove to Pat's place.

"Are you coming up?" she asked.

"Of course."

I saw her up, then went down again to fetch the luggage with the driver. When I returned Pat was still in the hall. She was talking with Lieutenant Colonel Hake and his wife.

We went into her room. It was light, early evening outside. On the table was a glass vase with pale red roses. Pat went to the window and looked out. Then she turned round. "How long were we away actually, Robby?"

"Exactly eighteen days."

"Eighteen days. It seems much longer."

"To me too. But it's always like that when you come out of it."

She shook her head. "I don't mean that."

She opened the balcony door and went out. There folded up against the wall leaned a white lounge deck-chair. She pulled it out and looked at it in silence.

When she came in again her expression had altered and her eyes were dark.

"Just look at the roses," said I. "They are from Köster. His card is beside them."

She picked up the card and then put it down again on the table. She looked at the roses, but I saw that she hardly noticed them. She was still in her thoughts with the lounge deck-chair. She had imagined.she had escaped it, and now once more perhaps it was to be part of her life. .

I let her be and said no more. There was no point in trying to divert her. She would have to face it, and it was as well it should happen now, while I was still there. One could only postpone it with words; sooner or later it was bound to come, and then perhaps it would only be harder.

She stood awhile by the table, her face lowered, her hands leaning upon it. Then she lifted her head and looked at me. I said nothing. She walked slowly round the table and put her hands on my shoulders.

"Old boy," said I.

She leaned against me. I held her tight. "Now we're going to deal with the business, eh?"

She nodded. Then she smoothed back her hair. "It was only a moment, Robby."

"I know."

There was a knock. The maid entered with the tea trolley. "That's good," said Pat.

"Will you have tea?" I asked.

"No, coffee. Good, strong coffee."

I stayed for half an hour. Then she grew tired; I saw it in her eyes.

"You ought to sleep a bit," said I.

"And you?"

"I'll go home and sleep too a bit. Then in two hours I'll fetch you for supper."

"You are tired?" she asked doubtfully.

"Yes, a little. It was hot in the train. And afterwards I must go for a while to the shop."

She asked no more questions. She was very tired and just sank down. I put her to bed and covered her well. She fell asleep immediately. I put the roses near her and Köster's card alongside, that she should have something to think about when she waked. Then I left.

On the way I stopped at a telephone box. I decided to 'phone Jaffé at once. At home it would be too difficult, the entire pension would be listening in.

I took up the receiver and gave the number of the clinic. After a time Jaffé came to the instrument.

"Lohkamp speaking," said I, clearing my throat. "We returned to-day. We have been back an hour."

"Did you come by car?" asked Jaffé.

"No, by train."

"So, and how is it?"

"All right," said I.

He considered a moment. "I want to examine Fräulein Hollmann to-morrow. At eleven, say. Would you tell her?"

"No," said I. "I don't want her to know I have 'phoned you. She is sure to ring you herself to-morrow. Perhaps you would tell her then."

"Very well. Let it stand at that. I will tell her."

Mechanically I shoved aside the fat, greasy telephone book. It lay on a little wooden pulpit. Telephone numbers were scribbled over the walls in pencil.

"Then can I come and see you in the afternoon?" I asked.

Jaffé did not answer.

"I'd like to know how things are with her," said I.

"I won't be able to tell you that to-morrow," Jaffé replied. "I shall have to observe her for at least a week. But I will let you know how "things stand then."

"Thanks." I stared at the pulpit in front of me. Someone had drawn something there. A fat girl with a big straw hat. *Ella is a goat* was written below. "Must she do anything special in the meantime?" I asked.

"I'll see that to-morrow. But I fancy she is quite well looked after in her place."

"I don't know. I hear that the people want to go away next week. Then she will be alone, except for the maid."

"So? Very good, then I'll discuss it with her to-morrow."

I pushed the telephone book once again over the drawing on the pulpit. "Do you think she—that she might have another attack like that?"

Jaffé hesitated a moment. "It's possible, of course," said he then, "but it is not probable. I will only be able to tell you that after I have examined her thoroughly. I'll call you up then."

"Thanks, do."

I hung up the receiver. Outside I stood a while in the street. It was dusty and close. Then I went home.

At the door I ran into Frau Zalewski. She shot out of Frau Bender's room like a cannon ball. As she caught sight of me she stopped.

"What, back already?"

"As you see. Anything happened in the meantime?"

"Nothing to do with you. No mail either. But Frau Bender has gone."

"Indeed. Why?"

Frau Zalewski put her hands on her hips. "Because the world is full of scoundrels. She has gone to the Christian Home. With her cat and twenty-six marks."

She explained that the orphanage, where Frau Bender had been children's nurse, had gone *phut.* The director had been speculating unwisely on the exchange. Frau Bender had been dismissed and had lost two months' arrears of pay.

"Has she found something else?" I asked thoughtlessly.

Frau Zalewski merely looked at me.

"No, no, of course not," said I.

"I told her she could stay on if she liked. There was no hurry about payment. But she wouldn't."

"Poor people are generally honest," said I. "Who's moving in there now, then?"

"The Hasses. It's cheaper than the room they have been having."

"And the Hasses'?"

She gave a shrug. "Must wait and see. I haven't much hope anyone will come."

"When will it be free, then?"

"To-morrow. The Hasses are moving now."

"How much does the room cost, actually?" I asked. An idea had suddenly occurred to me.

"Seventy marks."

"Much too dear," said I, now wide awake.

"With morning coffee, two rolls, and plenty of butter?"

"True. But leaving out Friday's morning coffee—fifty, not a pfennig more."

"Would you be thinking of taking it?" asked Frau Zalewski.

"Perhaps."

I went into my shack and contemplated meditatively the connecting door to the Hasses' room. Pat in the Zalewski boarding house! No, that was not a happy thought.

All the same I did go round after a while and knock.

Frau Hasse was in. She was sitting in the half-empty room before a mirror, a hat on her head, and powdering herself.

I greeted her, looking round the room as I did so. It was larger than I had thought. Now that the furniture was partly removed one could begin to see it. The carpets were plain, bright, and fairly new, the doors and windows freshly painted, and the balcony was quite big and fine.

"I suppose you've heard already what he is doing with me now," said Frau Hasse. "I must move into the room of that person over there. Isn't it a shame?"

"A shame?" I asked.

"Yes, a shame," she burst out excitedly. "You know I couldn't bear her, and now Hasse is forcing me to go into her room, without a balcony and with only one window. Merely because it is cheaper! Think how she will be triumphing in her Christian Home!"

"I don't imagine she is trumphing."

"Of course she's triumphing, make-believe children's nurse! Still water runs deep, let me tell you! And next door to that tart, that Erna Bönig! And the stink of cat!"

I looked up embarrassed. "But cats are very clean, beautiful animals," said I, "Besides, I've just been in the room. It doesn't smell of cats."

"So?" replied Frau Hasse with hostility, adjusting her hat. "That depends on the nose, of course. But I'm not going to do anything about it. He can lug the furniture across himself. I'm going out. I mean to have that, at least, out of this dog's life."

She stood up. Her spongy face was trembling with rage, so that the powder came off in a little rain of dust. I saw that she had painted her lips very red and was altogether done up to kill. She smelt like an entire perfumery as she sailed out.

I looked after her sheepishly. Then I explored the room thoroughly once more. I considered where one might put Pat's various pieces of furniture. But I soon gave that up. Pat here, always here, beside me—I could not picture it. The idea would probably never have occurred to me if she had been well. However . . .. I opened the door and stepped the measure of the balcony. But then I shook my head and returned to my room.

She was still asleep when I entered the room. I sat down quietly in an armchair by the bed, but she waked immediately.

"Sorry I waked you," said I.

"Have you been here all the time?" she asked.

"No. Only just come back."

She stretched and laid her cheek against my hand. "That's good. I don't like people watching when I am asleep."

"I can understand that. I'm not fond of it either. I didn't mean to look at you. I wanted merely not to wake you. Wouldn't you sleep a bit longer?"

"No, I'm quite rested. I'll get up at once."

I went into the room next door while she dressed. Outside it was growing slowly dark. From an open window opposite a gramophone was quacking the *Hohenfriedberg March.* A chap with a bald head and braces was attending to the instrument. Now he walked up and down the room doing Swedish exercises to the music. His bald head shone out of the semi-darkness like an agitated moon. I watched him indifferently. I was feeling depressed and gloomy.

Pat came in. She looked beautiful, quite fresh and not the least exhausted.

"You look splendid," said I surprised.

"I feel well too, Robby. As if I had had a good night's sleep. I change very quickly."

"Yes, by Jove. So quick sometimes one can hardly keep up."

She leaned against my shoulder and looked at me. "Too quick, Robby?"

"No. Only too slow on my part. I'm often a bit slow, Pat."

She smiled. "Slow is sure. And sure is good."

"About as sure as a cork on the water."

She shook her head. "You are much surer than you think. In fact you are altogether different from what you think. I have seldom seen anyone who was so much in error about himself as you."

I took my arm from her shoulder.

"Yes, darling," said she, nodding. "That is so, really. And now come, let's go and get something to eat."

"Where should we go then?" I asked.

"To Alfons'. I must see all that again. I feel as if I had been away for an eternity."

"Good," said I. "But have you the right hunger for it? You can't go to Alfons' unless you are hungry. He'd throw' you out otherwise."

She laughed. "But I'm terribly hungry."

"Then off we go." I was suddenly very glad.

Our entry into Alfons' was triumphal. He greeted us, vanished immediately, and returned half-strangled in a stiff collar and a green-spotted tie. He would not have done that for the Emperor of Germany. He was even a little embarrassed himself, at such an unheard-of mark of decadence.

"Well, Alfons, what have you got that's good?" asked Pat, propping her elbows on the table.

Alfons smirked, blew out his lips and made his eyes small. "You're in luck. There's crab to-day."

He took a step back to observe the effect. It was first rate.

"With it, a glass of new Moselle wine," he whispered, delighted, taking yet another step back.

He received a storm of applause—and particularly from the door, where with wild, yellow hair and sunburnt nose appeared the grinning face of the last of the romantics.

"Gottfried!" exclaimed Alfons. "You? Yourself? Man, what a day! Come to my bosom!"

"Now you'll see something," said I to Pat.

The two rushed into each other's arms. Alfons slapped Lenz on the back until it sounded as if there were a smithy next door. "Hans," he then shouted across to the waiter, "bring the Napoleon."

He lugged Gottfried to the bar. The waiter brought out a large dusty bottle. Alfons poured out two grasses.

"Pros't, Gottfried, you damned old roast pig."

"Pros't, Alfons, good old turnkey."

The two emptied their glasses at a gulp.

"First rate," said Gottfried. "A cognac for madonnas."

"A pity to tip it down like that," agreed Alfons. "But how can one drink slowly when one is happy. Come, let's have another."

He poured out and raised his glass. "You faithless old tomato, you."

Lenz laughed. "My dear old Alfons."

Alfons' eyes became moist. "Once more, Gottfried," said he, moved.

"On with the dance." Lenz held out his glass. "I only say No to a cognac when I can't raise my head off the floor."

"That's the way to talk." Alfons poured out the third glass.

A little out of breath, Lenz came to the table. He took out his watch. "Arrived at the workshop with the Citroën ten minutes to eight. What do you say to that?"

"A record," replied Pat. "Long live Jupp! I'll present him with a box of cigarettes myself."

"And you will get one portion of crab extra for your share," declared Alfons, who had followed on Gottfried's heels. Then he handed us each a sort of tablecloth. "Take your coats off and tie this round. Does the lady allow it, or not?"

"I consider it necessary, even," said Pat.

Alfons nodded his pleasure. "You are a sensible woman, I knew that. One must eat crab in comfort. Without fear of spots." He beamed. "You, of course, get something a bit smarter."

The waiter, Hans, brought a snow-white cook's apron. Alfons unfolded it and helped her in. "Suits you," he commented.

"The very thing," she replied laughing.

"I'm glad you like it," said Alfons amiably. "It warms one's heart."

"Alfons!" Gottfried knotted his tablecloth around his neck so that the points stuck away out. "I must say, at the moment it looks more like a barber's shop here than anything."

"We'll soon change that. But a little bit of art first."

Alfons went to the gramophone, and immediately the *Pilgrims' Chorus* from Tannhauser burst forth. We listened in silence.

Hardly had the last tones died away than the kitchen door opened and the waiter, Hans, appeared with a bowl as big as a baby's bath tub. It was steaming full of crabs. Coughing, he set it on the table.

"Bring me a serviette, too," said Alfons.

"You are going to eat with us, friend?" exclaimed Lenz. "There's an honour."

"If the lady has nothing against it?"

"The contrary, Alfons."

Pat moved her chair aside and he took a seat next her.

"Be as well if I sit beside you," said he, a trifle apologetic. "As a matter of fact I'm rather smart at serving them up. That's a bit tedious for a lady."

He dipped into the bowl and with uncanny rapidity set about dismantling a crab for her. With his enormous hands he did it so deftly and elegantly that she had nothing to do but eat the morsels appetisingly offered her on a fork.

"Taste good?" he asked.

"Wonderful." She raised her glass. "Your health, Alfons.'"

Alfons touched glasses gaily and emptied his slowly. I looked at her. I should have preferred it had been something without alcohol.

She felt my glance. *"Salut,* Bob," said she.

She was beautiful, radiantly happy.

"Salut, Pat," said I, and emptied my glass.

"Isn't it lovely here?" she asked, looking at me again.

"Grand." I filled mine once more. *"Pros't,* Pat!"

A glow passed over her face. *"Pros't,* Bob; *Pros't,* Gottfried!"

We drank. "Good wine," said Lenz.

"Graacher Abtsberg from last year," explained Alfons. "Glad you recognised it."

He hauled a second crab from the bowl and offered Pat the opened claw.

She declined. "You must eat that yourself, Alfons. You'll get nothing otherwise."

"Later. I'm quicker at it than the others."

"Very good." She took the claw. Alfons beamed with pleasure and helped her to some more. He looked like a great old owl feeding a little, white fledgling.

In conclusion we all drank one more round of Napoleon and then took leave of Alfons. Pat was delighted.

"It was lovely," said she. "Thank you very much, Alfons. It was perfectly lovely." She gave him her hand.

Alfons murmured something and kissed it. Lenz's eyes almost dropped out of his head with amazement. "Come again soon," said Alfons. "You too, Gottfried."

Little and forlorn under the lamp post outside stood the Citroën.

"Oh," said Pat and' stopped short. A tremor passed over her face.

"After his performance to-day I've christened him Hercules," said Gottfried, opening the door. "Should I drive you home?"

"No," said Pat.

"That is what I thought. Where do we go then?"

"To 'The Bar' or not, Robby?" She turned to me.

"Of course," said I; "of course we are going to 'The Bar.'"

We drove along through the streets very slowly. It was warm and clear. People were sitting in front of the Cafés. Music drifted across. Pat was sitting beside me. I suddenly could not believe that she was really ill; I made myself quite hot in the effort, but for a moment I just could not believe it.

In "The Bar" we met Ferdinand and Valentin. Ferdinand was in form. He got up and went toward Pat.

"Diana," said he, "back from the woods—" She smiled. He put his arm about her shoulders. "Brown, bold huntress of the silver bow—what will you drink?"

Gottfried removed Ferdinand's arm. "Sob merchants are always tactless," said he. "The lady is escorted by two gentlemen already; you probably have not noticed that, you great buffalo."

"Romantics are a following—not an escort," declared Ferdinand unperturbed.

Lenz grinned and turned to Pat. "Now I'm going to mix you something really remarkable. A Kolibri cocktail. A Brazilian specialty."

He went to the counter, mixed all kinds of things, and then brought along

the cocktail.

"How does it taste?" he asked.

"A bit thin, but Brazilian," Pat replied.

Gottfried laughed. "It is powerful all the same. Made with rum and vodka."

I saw at a glance that there was neither rum nor vodka in it—it was fruit juice, lemon, tomato, perhaps a drop of . Angostura. A non-alcoholic cocktail. But Pat, thank heaven, did not notice.

She had three large Kolibris, and I noticed how well she felt at not being treated as if she were ill. After an hour we left, only Valentin remaining. Lenz had arranged it so. He invited Ferdinand into the Citroën and steamed off. In that way it did not appear as if Pat and I. were leaving early. It was all very thoughtful, but for a moment it made me feel as miserable as a dog.

Pat took my arm. With her lovely, graceful stride she walked beside me; I felt the warmth of her hand, I saw the shimmer of the lamplight as it glided over her animated face— No, I could not believe that she was ill; I could believe it only in the daytime, but not at night when life was gentler, warmer, and full of promise.

"Should we go to my place for a bit?" I asked.

She nodded.

The passage of our pension was lighted. "Damn," said I. "What's happening now? Wait a minute, will you?"

I opened the door and looked in. The passage lay badly illuminated like some narrow suburban alley. The door to Frau Bender's room was wide-open, and there was light there too. Like a little black ant Hasse was trotting along the corridor, bowed under a standing lamp with pink silk shade. He turned slowly.

"Good evening," said I. "So late?" '

He lifted up his pale face with its drooping, dark moustache. "I only got back from the office an hour ago. And I only have time at night to do the moving."

"Is your wife not there then?"

He shook his head. "She's with some woman friend.

Thank God she has a friend at last—she spends a lot of time with her." He smiled guilelessly and contented, and trotted on. I brought Pat in.

"I think we won't make a light, eh?" I asked when we were in my room.

"Yes, darling. For one moment, then you can put it out again."

"You are insatiable," said I, and the red plush splendours briefly showed up in the shrill light, and as swiftly were out again.

The windows were open and the night air wafted in from the trees opposite, fresh as if from a wood.

"Lovely," said Pat and curled up in the corner of the window seat.

"Do you really like it here?"

"Yes, Robby. Like being in a big park in summer. It's grand."

"I suppose you didn't happen to notice the room next door as you passed?" I asked.

"No, why?"

"This fine big balcony here on the left belongs to it as well. It is quite shut in, and nothing opposite. Now if you lived there, you wouldn't even need a suit for your sun bathing."

"Yes, if I did live there—"

"You could," said I casually. "As you saw, the room will be free within a day or two."

She looked at me and smiled. "Do you think that sort of thing would quite suit us? To be always so near together?"

"But we wouldn't be together always," I replied. "I wouldn't be there in the daytime, for instance. And often not at night. On the other hand, if we could be together here, we wouldn't have to go and sit in restaurants, and always be parting so soon, as if we were merely on a visit."

She stirred a little in her corner. "It almost sounds as if you had thought it all out already, darling."

"And so I have," said I. "The whole evening, in fact."

She sat up. "Do you really mean it seriously, Robby?"

"Heavens, yes," said I. "Haven't you noticed that before?"

She was silent a moment. "Tell me, Robby," said she then, and her voice was deeper than before, "how do you come to mention it just now?"

"I come to mention it," I replied, more vigorously than.

I meant, for I suddenly felt that the decision that was now coming was about much more than merely the room, "I come to mention it, because during these last weeks I have seen how wonderful it was to be completely together. I can't bear it any longer, the hourly parting. I want to have more of you. I want you to be with me always; I have no desire any more for the

sophisticated game of hide-and-seek with love, it is repulsive to me; I want just you and again you, I can never have enougli of you, and I don't want to forgo one single minute of you."

I heard her breathing. She sat in the corner by the window, her hands about her knees, arid said nothing. Slowly the red glow of the electric sign rose above the trees opposite and cast a warm reflection on her bright shoes. Then it wandered over her dress and her hands. "You can laugh at me if you like," said I. "Laugh, why?"

"Well, because I say all the time, / want. After all you must want too."

She looked up. "Do you know, you have changed, Robby?"

"No."

"Oh, yes. You have admitted it. You want. You don't ask so much now. You simply want."

"That's not such a very big change. You can still say No, just the same, no matter how much I may want."

She suddenly leaned forward toward me. "But why should I say No, Robby?" said she, in a warm, tender tone. "Of course I want it too."

Astonished, I put my arms about her. Her hair brushed my face. "Is that true, Pat?"

"But yes, darling."

"Damn it," said I. "I imagined it would be much more difficult."

She shook her head. "It all rests with you, Robby."

"I almost believe it," said I, surprised.

She put an arm around my neck. "It is good, sometimes, not to have to think of anything. Not to have to do everything yourself. To be able to lean. Ach, darling, it is all quite easy really—one must only not make it difficult oneself."

I had to shut my teeth not to reply. That she of all people should say that.

"True," said I then, "true, Pat." It was not true at all.

We stood awhile by the window. "We'll bring all your things," said I. "You won't have to do without anything. We can even get a tea trolley somewhere. Frida will soon learn."

"But we have one, darling. It belongs to me."

"So much the better. I'll start training Frida to-mor row."

She rested her head against my shoulder. I felt that she was tired.

"Shall I take you home now?" I asked.

"Soon. I'll just lie down here a minute."

She lay quietly, without speaking, on the bed, as if she slept. But her eyes were open and occasionally glinted in the light of the advertisement signs that rose up the walls and travelled over the bed-clothes like gay northern lights. Outside all was still. Next door one could hear now and then Hasse bumbling about amid the ruins of his hopes, his marriage, and perhaps even his life.

"You ought to stay here," said I.

She sat up. "Not to-night, darling."

"I'd much rather you stayed."

"To-morrow."

She got up and moved lightly about the dark room. I thought of the day when she stayed with me the first time and had gone just so quietly about the room dressing in the early morning light. I don't know what it was, but there was something touchingly matter-of-fact, almost shocking about it; it was like a gesture out of some distant, buried time; like silent obedience to some command, the reason for which no one now remembered.

She came back to me out of the darkness and took my face in her hands. "It has been lovely with you, darling. Lovely. It is good you are there."

I did not reply. I could not reply.

I took her home and went back to "The Bar." Köster was there.

"Sit down," said he. "How goes it?"

"Nothing special, Otto."

"Have something to drink?"

"If I do drink I'll have to drink a lot. I don't want to do that. But I wouldn't mind doing something else. Is Gottfried out with the taxi?"

"No."

"Good. Then I think I'll take it for a couple of hours."

"I'll come down with you," said Köster. I took out the car and left Otto. Then I drove to the stand. In front of me two cars were parked. After me came Gustav and Tommy, the actor. Then the two front cars went, and shortly after I also got a fare—a young woman who wanted to go to the Vineta.

The Vineta was a popular dance-hall with table telephones, pneumatic post, and similar novelties for provincials. It lay a little apart from the other places, in a dark side street.

We stopped. The girl rummaged in her bag and offered me a fifty-mark

note. I gave a shrug. "Sorry, I can't change it."

The porter had come forward. "How much is it?" asked the girl.

"One seventy."

She turned to the porter. "Would you settle it for me? Come, and I'll give you the money at the cashier's."

The porter flung open the door and went with her to the cashier's desk. Then he returned. "There—" I counted. "One fifty, that is—"

"Don't talk tripe or are you quite green? Two groschen porter's tax if you want to come back. Hop it."

There were places where one tipped the porter, but that only when he got you a fare, not when you brought one. "I'm not that green," said I. "I'm getting one seventy."

"You'll get one in the snout," he growled. "You toe the line, my boy; this is my stand."

I didn't care about the two groschen. Only I wasn't in a mood to let him do the dirty on me. "Cut the cackle and pass up the rest," said I.

The porter hit so suddenly that I could not cover myself; nor, on my box, could I dodge it. My head struck the steering wheel. Dazed, I picked myself up. The porter was standing in front of me: "Want another, you big stiff?"

In a second I calculated my chances. There was nothing for it. The fellow was stronger than I. My only hope would have been to take him by surprise. I could not punch from the box, it would have no power. And by the time I got out' of the car he could down me half a dozen times. I looked at him. He blew his beery breath in my face: "One word more and your wife's a widow."

I looked at him. I did not move, I stared into that big healthy face. I devoured it with my eyes. I saw exactly where I must hit; I was ice-cold with rage. But I did not stir. I saw the face, too close, too distinct, as through a magnifying glass, immense, every bristle, the red, coarse, porous skin . . .

A policeman's helmet gleamed. "What's up here?"

The porter put on a servile look. "Nothing, Herr Constable."

He looked at me. "Nothing," said I.

He looked from the porter back to me. "You're bleeding?"

"Knocked myself."

The porter stepped back a pace. There was a grin in his eye. He thought I was afraid to accuse him.

"Right, off you go then," said the policeman.

I stepped on the accelerator and drove back to the stand.

"Man, you do look fine," said Gustav.

"It's only my nose," I replied, telling him the story.

"Come over into the pub," said Gustav. "I wasn't a Sergeant Stretcher-Bearer for nothing. Dirty trick, to hit a sitting man."

He took me into the pub kitchen, got some ice and worked on me for half an hour. "You won't so much as show a bruise," he explained.

At last he stopped. "Now, how's it with the nut? All right, eh? Then we won't lose any time."

Tommy came in. "Was that the big porter at the Vineta? He's famous for his punches. Hasn't had his taste yet, unfortunately."

"Well, he's going to now," said Gustav. . "Yes, but from me," I replied.

Gustav looked at me disapprovingly. "Before you are out of the car—"

"I've thought of a turn already. If I don't bring it off, then you can always have a go."

"Good."

I put on Gustav's cap and we took his car so the porter should not smell a rat. He wouldn't be able to see much anyway, the street was too dark.

We drove up. Not a soul was to be seen in the street. Gustav jumped out, a twenty-mark note in his hand.

"Damn. No small change. Porter, can you change it? One seventy, isn't it? You fix it."

He made as if to go to the cashier. The porter approached me, coughing, and pushed one mark fifty at me. I held my hand farther out. "Push off—" he growled. "The rest, you dirty swine!" I shouted. He stood a second as if petrified.

"Man," said he then, softly, licking his lips, "you'll be sorry for that for a month."

He hauled off. The blow would have knocked me senseless. But I was prepared; I turned and ducked, and his fist crashed with all its weight on to the sharp steel claw of my starting handle that I had been holding in readiness, concealed in my left hand. With a yell the porter leapt back shaking his hand. He was hissing with pain like a steam engine, and standing quite open, without cover.

I shot out of the car. "Do you recognise me?" I spat and hit him in the

stomach. He toppled over.

"One!" Gustav started counting from the door.

By "Five" the porter was up again, looking glassy. As before I saw his face in front of me, very distinct—this healthy, big, stupid, common face; this perfectly healthy, powerful brute; this swine who would never have sick lungs; and suddenly I felt a red film over my brain and my eyes, I sprang at it and punched and punched; everything that had been tormenting me these last days and weeks I punched into that healthy, big face until I was hauled off.

"Man, you'll kill him!" cried Gustav.

I looked around. The porter, streaming blood, was leaning against the wall. He crumpled up, fell, and then slowly like an enormous shining insect in his uniform began crawling on all fours to the entrance.

"He won't be so free with his fists again," said Gustav. "But off we go—shake a leg, before anybody comes. That was near to assault and battery."

We flung the money on the pavement, got in and drove off.

"Am I bleeding too?" I asked, "or is that the porter?"

"Your nose again," explained Gustav. "He landed a very lovely left square on it."

"I didn't even notice it."

Gustav laughed.

"Do you know," said I, "I feel ever so much better."

Chapter XVIII

Our taxi was standing outside "The Bar." I went in to relieve Gottfried and to get the key and the papers. Gottfried came out with me.

"Made any money?" I asked.

"So-so," he replied. "Either there are too many taxis or too few people to ride in them. How was it with you?"

"Bad. Stood around the whole night and didn't take twenty marks."

"Dull times." Gottfried raised his eyebrows. "Then you're probably not in such a hurry to-day, eh?"

"No, why?"

"You can take me along a bit."

"All right." We climbed in. "Where do you want to go then?" I asked.

"To the cathedral."

"What?" I asked. "Do you think I might have misheard? 'Cathedral,' I understood."

"No my son, you did not mishear. Cathedral it is."

I looked at him astonished.

"Don't stare; drive," said Gottfried.

"Very good." We set off.

The cathedral lay in an old quarter of the city in an open place surrounded by houses of the clergy. I stopped at the main door.

"Farther," said Gottfried; "right round."

He pulled me up outside a little doorway at the back and got out.

"Lots of fun," said I. "I take it you're going to confession."

"Come with me," he replied.

I laughed. "Not to-day. I've said my prayers already this morning. That does me for the whole day."

"Don't talk silly, baby. Come on. I want to be generous and show you something."

I followed him curiously. We passed through the little door and were immediately in the cloisters. They made a large quadrangle and consisted of long rows of arches supported on the inner side by grey granite pillars; and they framed a garden. In the middle rose up a large, weatherworn cross with

the figure of Christ. At the sides on stone reliefs were depicted the Stations of the Cross. In front of each picture was an old praying bench. The garden had run wild and flowered over and over.

Gottfried pointed to a couple of immense white and red rosebushes. "I wanted to show you that. Do you recognise them?"

Surprised, I halted. "Of course I recognise them," said I. "So this is where you glean, you old church-robber."

When Pat had moved into Frau Zalewski's a week ago Lenz had sent her in the evening, by Jupp, an immense bunch of roses. There had been so many that Jupp had had to go down twice, and each time returned with both arms full. I had already given myself a headache trying to think wherever Gottfried could have got them; for I knew his rule, never to buy flowers. I had never seen them in the city park.

"That is a real idea," said I, appreciatively. "Takes a man to think of that."

Gottfried beamed. "The garden here is a proper gold mine." He laid a hand gaily on my shoulder. "I hereby take you into partnership. I imagine you'll be able to make good use of it just now."

"Why just now?" I asked.

"Because the park is pretty bare. And that's been your hunting ground to date, I think?"

I nodded.

"Besides," continued Gottfried, "you're coming now to the time when the difference between a bourgeois and a cavalier begins to show. A bourgeois always gets less attentive the longer he knows a woman. A cavalier, always more attentive." He made an extended gesture. "With all this you can become an absolutely staggering cavalier."

I laughed. "That is all fine, Gottfried," said I. "But what happens when you get caught? There's not much of a getaway, and pious people might easily consider it as desecration of a holy place."

"My dear boy," replied Lenz, "do you see anybody here? Since the war people go to political meetings, not to church."

That was true. "But what about the parsons?" I asked.

"The flowers don't mean anything to the parsons, or the garden would be better looked after. And the Almighty will have his fun, if you give someone pleasure with it. He's not built that way. He's an old soldier."

"Yes, you're right there." I contemplated the gigantic old bushes. "They

will take care of the next couple of weeks, Gottfried."

"Longer than that. You're really in luck here. This is a very lasting, long-flowering sort of rose. You'll reach well into September. And then there are asters here, and chrysanthemums. Come, I'll show you."

We walked through the garden. The smell of the roses was intoxicating. Swarms of bees like a buzzing cloud flew from flower to flower.

"Just look at that," said I and stood still. "Where ever can they come from here, in the middle of the city. There aren't any beehives around here. Unless you think the parsons keep a few up on their roofs."

"No, brother," replied Lenz. "They come dead straight from a farm somewhere. Only they happen to know their way." He winked an eye. "We don't, eh?"

I gave a shrug. "Perhaps we do, though. Anyway, a small part. So far as one can. You know?"

"No. And don't want to know. Purposes make life bourgeois."

I glanced up at the cathedral spire. Silky green it stood out against the blue sky, endlessly old and still, with swallows flying round.

"How quiet it is here," said I.

Lenz nodded. "Yes, my son, here one recognises it is only for want of time one is not a good man, eh?"

"Time and quiet," I replied. "Quiet, too."

He laughed. " 'Too late.' said the old Captain, weeping bitterly. Now it's reached a pitch where we can't endure quiet. . . . So out we go. Back into the rumpus."

I put Gottfried down and drove back to the stand. On the way I passed the cemetery. I knew that Pat would be lying in her lounge chair on the balcony, and hooted a few times. But nothing showed up and I drove on. To compensate I did see, a bit farther on, Frau Hasse in a sort of taffeta silk wrap sailing along the street and disappearing round a corner. I drove after her to ask if I might take her anywhere. But as I reached the crossing I saw her get into a car that had been waiting behind the corner. It was a rather dilapidated Mercedes limousine, from 1923, that rattled off immediately. A chap with a nose like a duck's bill and a loud checked suit was sitting at the wheel. I gazed after the car for some time. That comes of a woman sitting alone in a house all the time. Pensively I drove back to the stand and took my place in the line

of waiting taxis.

The sun beat upon the roof. We moved forward slowly. I sat dully on the box and tried to sleep. But I could not get the picture of Frau Hasse out of my head. It was quite a different matter, but when all was said and done Pat was also alone all day.

I got out and went forward to Gustav's car. "Here, have a drink," he commanded, offering me a thermos flask. "Wonderfully cool. My own invention. Iced coffee. Stays like that in the heat for hours. Yes, Gustav is practical."

I took a cup and drank it out. "If you're so practical," said I, "then tell me what can a man get to amuse a woman who is alone a lot?"

"As simple as that?" Gustav looked at me with a lofty expression. "Robert, man—why, a child or a dog. Ask me something harder."

"A dog!" said I in surprise. "Damn it, of course, a dogl You've hit it. With a dog one is never lonely."

I offered him a cigarette. "Listen, you don't happen to know about them? A mongrel must be fairly cheap to buy."

Gustav shook his head reproachfully. "Ah Robert, you little know what a treasure you have in me. My future father-in-law is assistant secretary of the Dobermann Terrier Club. You can have a pup, of course; first class pedigree, too. We've a litter there: four-two, grandmother the champion Hertha von Toggenburg."

Gustav was a fortunate man. Not only was his fiancee's father a breeder of Dobermanns, but he was a pub-keeper as well, proprietor of the Neuerklaus; and his fiancee herself had a laundry. Gustav did himself proud. He had his eats and drinks off his "father-in-law" and his fiancee washed and ironed his shirts. He was in no hurry to marry. Then it would be his turn to worry.

I explained to Gustav that a Dobermann was not quite the right idea. It was too big for me and not reliable.

Gustav reflected a moment. As an old soldier he was accustomed to act on the spur of the moment.

"Just come with me," said he. "We'll do a bit of speculating. I know something. Only don't you put your spoke in."

"Right."

He led me to a little shop. In the window were aquariums full of algae. In a box were squatting some wretched guinea pigs. On the sides hung, cages

with restlessly hopping, forever turning bullfinches, goldfinches, and canaries.

A bandy-legged little chap with a brown embroidered waistcoat came toward us. Watery eyes, sallow skin, a nose like a fire ball—a beer and schnapps drinker.

"Say, Anton," said Gustav, "how did Asta do?"

"Second prize and honourable mention at Cologne," replied Anton.

"Lousy," declared Gustav. "Why not first?"

"Gave the first to Udo Blankenfels," growled Anton. "But I don't complain."

In the rear of the shop there was barking and whimpering. Gustav went over. He turned, carrying by the scruff of the neck two little terriers, in the left a black and white, in the right a reddish brown. Imperceptibly the hand with the reddish brown twitched. I looked at him: yes.

It was a lovely, playful little thing. Straight legs, square body, oblong head, intelligent and cheeky. Gustav let them both go.

"Funny little bastard," said he and pointed to the reddish brown. "Where did you get him?"

Anton had him, so he said, from a lady who had gone to South America. Gustav burst into incredulous laughter. Offended, Anton produced a pedigree that went back to Noah's Ark. Gustav made a gesture of refusal and interested himself in the black and white. Anton asked a hundred marks for the red-brown one. Gustav offered five. He didn't like his great-grandfather. There was something wrong with his tail. And his ears weren't right, either. The black and white though—he was tip-top.

I stood in the corner and listened. Suddenly something reached for my hat. Surprised, I turned round. A little monkey was sitting in the corner on his perch, slightly huddled, with a yellow skin and melancholy face.^He had black, round eyes and the troubled lips of an old woman. Around his belly he had a leather girdle to which was fixed a chain. The hands were small, black, and shockingly human.

I stayed where I was and kept perfectly still. Slowly the monkey edged nearer along his perch. As he did so he watched me steadily, not distrustfully, but with an extraordinarily wary gaze. Cautiously he at last stretched out his hand. I offered him a finger. He drew back, then took it. It was queer to feel the cool, childish hand—how it gripped my finger. It was as if some poor, dumb human being, pent up in the crooked body, were trying to free and save

itself. One could not look long into those deathly sad eyes.

Snorting Gustav emerged again from a forest of genealogical trees. "Agreed then, Anton; you get one of Hertha's Dobermann pups in exchange. The best deal you ever did." Then he turned to me. "Do you want to take him with you now?"

"What does he cost, then?"

"Nothing. Exchanged for the Dobermann I gave you before. Yes, you must let Gustav have his way. Gustav is the boy."

We arranged that I should fetch the dog later when I was through with the taxi.

"Do you know what you've got there?" Gustav asked me when we were outside. "Something really rare: an Irish terrier. *Primissima.* Without a blemish. And a pedigree to him, my hat, that you had better not look at or you will have to bow every time you want to speak to the little blighter."

"Gustav," said I, "you have done me a great favour. Come, let's have a drink together of the oldest cognac we can dig up."

"Not to-day," declared Gustav. "I must have a steady hand to-day. I'm playing skittles at my club to-night. Promise me you'll come along sometime. There are all sorts of big guns there, a postmaster even."

"I'll come," said I. "Even if the postmaster isn't there."

Shortly before six I drove back to the workshop. Köster was awaiting me. "Jaffé telephoned this afternoon. You are to ring him."

For an instant I could not get my breath.

"Did he say anything, Otto?"

"No, nothing in particular. Only that he would be in his consulting room until five. After that at the Dorothee Hospital. So you will have to phone there."

"Right."

I went into the office. It was warm and sticky, but I was freezing and the receiver shook in my hand. "Nonsense," said I and supported my arm firmly on the table.

It was a long while before I got on to Jaffé.

"Are you free?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Then come out here at once. I'll be here for another hour."

I wanted to ask him if something had happened to Pat. But I could not do it. "Good. I'll be there in ten minutes."

I put down the receiver and immediately rang home. The maid came to the instrument. I asked for Pat. "I don't know if she's in," said Frida uncivilly. "I'll have a look."

I waited. My head was thick and hot. It seemed endless. Then I heard a crackling and Pat's voice. "Robby?"

I closed my eyes for a moment. "How are you, Pat?"

"All right. I have been sitting on the balcony reading until just now. An exciting book."

"So, an exciting book," said I. "That's fine. I only wanted to say that I'll be home a bit later this evening. Have you finished the book?"

"No, I'm in the middle of it. It will last a couple of hours yet."

"I'll be there long before that. So now read away quickly."

I remained sitting a moment. Then I stood up. "Otto," said I, "may I have Karl for a bit?"

"Of course. I'll drive you if you like. I've nothing to do here."

"It's not necessary. Nothing's happened. I've just rung home."

What a light, thought I as Karl shot out on to the street, what a marvellous evening light over the roofs! How full of good life is!

I had to wait for Jaffé a few minutes. A nurse showed me into a small room in which old numbers of magazines lay about. On the window ledge stood some flowerpots with creepers. It was always the same magazines in brown wrappers, and always the same dismal creepers; they are only to be found in doctors' waiting rooms and hospitals.

Jaffé came in. He was wearing a snow-white overall that still showed the creases from the ironing. But as he sat down facing me I saw on the inside of his right sleeve a little spurt of bright red blood. I had seen a lot of blood in my time—but this tiny spot suddenly affected me more sickeningly than any number of blood-soaked bandages. My mood of hopefulness vanished.

"I promised to tell you how things stand with Fräulein Hollmann," said Jaffé.

I nodded and looked at the tablecloth. It had a bright, plush pattern. I stared at the interlacing hexagons and had the crazy feeling that everything would go all right if only I could hold out and not have to blink before Jaffé

resumed speaking.

"She was six months in the sanatorium two years ago. Did you know that?"

"No," said I, and continued to look at the tablecloth.

"It improved after that. I have examined her thoroughly now. She must absolutely go in again this winter. She can't remain here in the city."

I still gazed at the hexagons. They swam into one another and started to dance.

"When must she go?" I asked.

"In the autumn. By the end of October, at the latest."

"It wasn't a passing haemorrhage then?"

"No."

I raised my eyes.

"I don't need to tell you, probably," Jaffé went on, "that it is a quite unpredictable disease. A year ago it seemed to have stopped, the patch had healed, and it was to be assumed would remain so. Just as they have now broken out again, so they may unexpectedly come to a halt again. I'm not merely saying that—it really is so. I have myself seen many remarkable cures."

"And worsenings, too?"

He looked at me. "That too, of course."

He started to explain the details. Both lungs were affected, the right less, the left more so. Then he broke off and rang for the nurse. "Bring me my portfolio, please."

The nurse brought it. Jaffé took out two large photographs. He drew off the crackling envelopes and held them to the window. "You will see better this way. These are the two X rays."

I saw the vertebrae of a backbone on the transparent, grey plate, the shoulder blades, the collar bones, the sockets of the upper arm and the flat arch of the ribs. But I saw more than that—I saw a skeleton. Dark and ghostly it rose up out of the pale, confused shadows of the photograph. I saw Pat's skeleton. Pat's skeleton.

With the forceps Jaffé traced out the various lines and colourings on the plate and explained them. He did not notice that I was no longer looking. The thoroughness of the scientist had absorbed him. At last he turned to me. "Have you understood?"

"Yes," said I.

"What's the matter, then?" he asked.

"Nothing," I replied. "Only I can't look at that too well."

"Ach, so." He put on his glasses. Then he put back the photographs into their covers and looked at me searchingly. "Don't you indulge any unhelpful ideas."

"I don't," said I. "But it's a god-damned miserable business. There are millions of healthy human beings. Then why not this one?"

Jaffé' was silent awhile.

"Nobody has an answer to that," said he then.

"Yes," I replied, suddenly embittered and numb with anger: "no one can answer that. Of course not. Nobody has an answer to misery and death. No, damn it; and what's more one can't do anything against it."

Jaffé looked at me a long time.

"Forgive me," said I. "But there's nothing I can do. That's what is so damnable."

He continued to look at me. "Have you time to spare?" he asked.

"Yes," said I. "Enough."

He stood up. "I must make my evening round now. I'd like you to come with me. Nurse will give you a white overall. Then you'll pass with the patients for my assistant."

I did not know what he intended, but I took the overall which the nurse was offering to me.

We went down the long corridor. Through the wide windows came the rosy glow of evening—a soft, subdued, quite unreal, hovering light. Some windows stood open, and the scent of lime flowers wafted in.

Jaffé opened a door. A sticky, foul smell came out to meet us. A woman with wonderful hair, the colour of old gold, in which the light shimmered in bright reflections, lifted her hand feebly. Her forehead was aristocratic and narrow at the temples, but below the eyes a bandage began. It extended right to the mouth. Jaffé loosed it carefully. I saw that the woman had no nose—in its place an encrusted, slimy, red wound with two holes in it. Jaffé replaced the bandage.

"Good," said he in a friendly voice and turned to go.

He closed the door behind him. I stood a moment outside and looked into the soft evening light.

"Come on," said Jaffé and walked ahead of me into the next room.

"The hot gurgling and coughing of delirium greeted us. It was a chap with a leaden-coloured face in which stood bright red patches. His mouth was open, his eyes bulging and his hands travelled restlessly hither and thither over the counterpane. He was quite unconscious. The temperature chart shewed a steady hundred and four degrees. A nurse was sitting by the bed reading. She put the book aside and stood up as Jaffé entered. He glanced at the chart and shook his head. "Double pneumonia and pleurisy. Been fighting like a steer for a fortnight. Relapse. Was almost well. Went to work too soon. Wife and four kids. Hopeless." He listened to his chest and felt his pulse. The nurse helped him. As she did so, her book fell on the floor. I picked it up and saw it was a cookery book. The man in the bed scratched unceasingly with spiderlike hands over the bedcovers. That was the only sound in the room. "You stay the night, here, nurse," said Jaffé.

We went out. The rosy twilight outside had become more colourful. It now filled the corridor like a cloud. "Damned light," said I.

"Why?" asked Jaffé.

"They don't go together. This and that."

"Oh yes," said Jaffé, "they go all right."

In the next room lay a woman breathing heavily. She had been brought in during the afternoon with severe veronal poisoning. Her husband had had an accident the day before, and had been carried in to his wife in the house, with his back broken, shrieking, fully conscious. He had died there during the night.

"Will she get over it?" I asked.

"Probably."

"What's the point?"

"I've had five similar cases the last few years," said Jaffé. "Only one tried a second time. With gas. She died. Of the others two married again."

In the next room was a man who had been crippled for twelve years. He had a waxen skin, a thin, black beard, and very big, still eyes.

"How goes it?" asked Jaffé.

The man made a vague movement. Then he pointed to the window —"Just look at the sky. It's going to rain, I can feel it." He laughed. "One always sleeps better when it rains." In front of him on the bedcover lay a leather chessboard with pieces that could be inserted so that they would not slip. A pile of magazines and some books lay beside it.

We passed on. I saw a young woman with horror-stricken eyes and blue lips, completely shattered by a difficult birth —a crippled child with crooked, feeble legs and water on the brain—a man with no stomach—an owl-like grey-haired old woman who wept because her relatives did not bother about her; she was too long dying for them—a blind man who believed he would see again—a syphilitic child, with its father sitting by the bedside—a woman who had had the second breast removed that morning—another twisted up with arthritis—a third whose ovaries had been taken out—a workman with crushed kidneys—room after room it went on, room after room the same thing: groaning, tormented bodies, motionless, all but extinguished figures; a seeming endless line of misery, fear, resignation, pain, despair, hope, trouble; and each time, when the door had closed, again in the corridor, suddenly, the unearthly rosy light of evening; always after the horror of the cubicles this cloud of soft, grey golden glory, of which one could not say whether it were dreadful irony or divine consolation.

At the entrance to the operating theatre Jaffé stopped. Harsh light penetrated the frosted glass panes of the door. Two nurses wheeled in a flat trolley. On it a woman was lyinc;. I encountered her gaze. She did not see me; she was looking somewhere into the remote distance. Yet I winced before those eyes, such courage and composure and calm were in them.

Jaffé's face was suddenly tired. "I don't know if it was right," said he; "but it would have been no use to try and reassure you with words. You wouldn't have believed me. Now you have seen that most of these people are much more ill than Pat Hollmann; some have nothing left but their hope. Yet the majority will come through, get better again. That's what I wanted to show you."

I nodded. "You were right," said I.

"Nine years ago my wife died. She was twenty-five. Never been sick. Flu." He was silent a moment. "You realize why I tell you that?"

I nodded again.

"You can't know anything beforehand. The incurable can survive the healthy. Life is a strange phenomenon." His face was now quite wrinkled. A nurse came and whispered something to him. He straightened and nodded toward the theatre. "I must go in now. Don't let Pat see you are worried. That's the main thing. Can you do that?"

"Yes," said I.

He shook hands and then went quickly with the nurse through the glass

door into the chalk-white lighted room.

I climbed slowly down the many stairs. The lower I went the darker it became, and on the first floor the electric lamp's were already burning. Then as I came out into the street I saw the rosy twilight flare up once more from the horizon as under some deep breath. Then immediately it was extinguished and turned to grey.

I remained for some time sitting in the car staring ahead. Then I pulled myself together and drove back to the workshop. Köster was waiting for me at the gate.

"Did you know?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied. "But Jaffé wanted to tell you himself." I nodded.

Köster looked at me.

"Otto," said I, "I'm not a child, and I know nothing is lost yet. But it may be hard not to betray myself if I have to be alone with Pat to-night. To-morrow will be all right. I'll be through with it by then. Couldn't we all go somewhere together this evening?"

"Why, sure, Bob. I had thought of that already and fixed it with Gottfried."

"Then let me have Karl again. I'll drive home and get Pat first and then, in an hour's time, you."

"Right."

I drove off. In Nikolaistrasse it struck me that I had forgotten the dog. I turned and went back to get him.

The shop was not lighted but the door was open. Anton was sitting at the back of the shop on a camp bed. He had' a bottle in his hand. "Tricked me, Gustav did," said he, smelling like a whole distillery.

The terrier sprang toward me, sniffed me and licked my hand. His eyes shone green in the reflected light that entered from the street. Anton stood up. He swayed and suddenly started weeping.

"My little dog, now you are going away too. Everything goes away—Thilda dead—Minna gone—tell me, mister, what do the likes of us live for, really?"

The final touch! The little cheerless, electric light which he now switched on, the decaying smell of the aquariums, the light rustling of the tortoises and the birds, and the little bloated fellow in this shop . . .

"The big bugs, they know of course—but tell me, mister, the likes of us what do we have to live for, I want to know? What do we poor miserable mongrels have to live for, eh sir?" The monkey uttered a lamentable cry and sprang like a madman to and fro on his perch. His shadow leapt with him, large upon the wall. "Koko," sobbed the little man, who had been sitting alone in the darkness drinking, "my only, come!" He held out the bottle to him. The monkey reached for it.

"You'll do the creature in, if you give him that to drink," said I.

"And what of it, mister?" he stuttered. "A few years longer on the chain or not—it's all one—all one—sir."

I took the dog that was pressing warm against me and went. Graceful, with long, easy movements, it ran beside me to the car.

I drove home and with the clog on the lead, went cautiously up. In the passage I stopped and looked in the mirror. My face was as usual. I knocked on Pat's door, opened it a little, and let the dog in.

I remained outside, holding firmly to the lead, and waited. But instead of Pat's voice I heard unexpectedly Frau Zalewski's bass: "Good gracious!"

Breathing again, I looked in. I had been afraid of the first moment alone with Pat. Now it was all easy; Frau Zalewski was a bulkhead to be relied on.

She was sitting enthroned at the table, a cup of coffee beside her and a pack of cards spread out in mystic order in front of her. Pat, with shining eyes, was curled up beside her having her future told.

"Good evening," said I, suddenly very pleased.

"There he comes," announced Frau Zalewski solemnly. "The short way in the evening hour, beside him a dark gentleman at the top of the house."

The dog pulled free, and, barking, shot between my legs into the room.

"My gracious!" cried Pat. "But it's an Irish terrier!"

"One up to you," said I. "I didn't know that myself, an hour ago."

She bent down and the dog sprang up stormily on her. "What's his name then, Robby?"

"No idea. Probably Cognac or Whisky or some such, after his last owner."

"Does he belong to us?"

"So far as any living creature can belong to another, yes."

She was quite breathless with joy. "We'll call him Billy, Robby. My

mother had one when she was a girl. She often told me about it. His name was Billy too."

"Then I've struck it lucky," said I.

"Is it house-trained?" asked Frau Zalewski.

"He has a pedigree like a duke," I replied. "And dukes are house-trained."

"Not when they are little. How old is he then?"

"Eight months. That is as much as sixteen years with a human being."

"He doesn't look house-trained," declared Frau Zalewski.

"He needs washing, that's all."

Pat stood up and put her arm about Frau Zalewski's shoulder. I looked at her, perplexed. "I've always wanted to have a dog," said she. "You will let us keep him, won't you? You surely haven't anything against it."

For the first time since I had known her, Frau Zalewski was at a loss what to say. "Well, in that case—so far as I am concerned," she replied. "Of course it is there in the cards. A surprise about a gentleman in the house."

"Is it also in the cards that we are going out this evening?" I asked.

Pat laughed. "We hadn't got that far, Robby. We had just arrived at you."

Frau Zalewski rose and swept up the cards. "You can believe in it, and you cannot believe in it, and you can believe in it mistakenly, like Zalewski. With him the nine of spades always stood as an evil omen above the watery element. He took it to mean he must beware of water. But it was schnapps and Pilsner."

"Pat," said I when she had gone, and I took her in my arms, "it is wonderful to come home and find you here. It is a constant new surprise to me. When I come up the last flight and open the door, I always have palpitations lest it may not be true."

She looked at me smiling. She almost never answered when I said that sort of thing. I couldn't have imagined it, and could hardly have suffered it anyway if she had said anything like it—it seemed to me a woman ought not to tell a man that she loves him. Pat's eyes became only radiant and happy, and thereby she said more than many words.

I held her tight a long time, I felt the warmth, of her skin and the faint fragrance of her hair—I held her tight and there was nothing there but her; the darkness fell away, she lived, she breathed, and nothing was lost.

"Are we really going out, Robby?" she asked, near to my face.

"All of us together," I replied. "Köster and Lenz too. Karl is at the door now."

"And Billy?"

"Billy comes, of course. What should we do with what is left of the supper otherwise? Or have you eaten already?"

"No, not yet. I've been waiting for you."

"But you shouldn't wait for me. Never. It's terrible waiting for someone."

She shook her head. "You don't understand, Robby. It's only terrible to have nothing to wait for."

She switched on the light over the looking-glass. "But now I must start to dress, or I shall never be ready. Are you dressing too?"

"Later," said I. "I'll soon be done. Let me stay here awhile."

I called the dog to me and sat in the armchair by the window. I liked to sit quietly and watch Pat while she dressed. I was never more aware of mystery, of the eternal strangeness of woman than in watching this light hither-and-thithering before the looking-glass, this contemplative appraisal, this complete absorption in herself, this slipping back into the unconscious sagacity of sex. I could not imagine a woman talking and laughing when she dressed— and if she did, must lack the mystery and inexplicable charm of the ever illusive. I loved Pat's graceful and yet lithe movements before the mirror, it was marvellous to watch how she reached to her hair, or deftly and cautiously . applied an eyebrow pencil to her forehead. She had something then about her of a deer and of a slim panther, and something too of an Amazon before the battle. She forgot everything around her, her face was grave and concentrated, quietly and attentively she held it up to its reflection in the looking-glass, and, as she leaned close toward it, it seemed no longer to be a reflection, but as if two women were there eyeing one another with age-old, knowing look —bold and appraising, out of the twilight of reality and the centuries.

The fresh breath of evening came in through the open window. I sat quietly there, I had forgotten nothing of the afternoon, I knew it all quite well —but as I looked across at Pat I felt the sombre grief, that had sunk down in me like a stone, begin to be lapped about by a wild hope, change and in some strange way mingle with hope; the one became the other; the grief, the hope, the wind, the evening, and the beautiful girl between the shining mirror and the lights; yes, for a moment I had a strange intuition that just this, and in a

real and profound sense, is life: and perhaps happiness even—love with a mixture of sadness, reverence, and silent knowledge.

Chapter XIX

I was standing at the cab stand waiting. Gustav came up with his car and pulled in behind me.

"How's the pup, Robert?" he asked.

"He's fine," said. I.

"And you?"

I waved my hand ill-humouredly. "I'd be fine too, if I could earn a bit more. Think of it, two whole fifty pfennig fares to-day."

He nodded. "It gets steadily worse. Everything is getting steadily worse. And more to come."

"Yes, and I absolutely must have some money," said I. "Right now. A lot of money."

Gustav scratched his chin.

"A lot of money." Then he looked at me. "There's not a great deal to be picked up anywhere, really. Unless you speculate. What do you say to the tote? There are races to-day. I know a first-rate joint. Made twenty-eight to one on Aida there, just recently."

"Don't care what it is. Is there a chance, that's the main thing?"

"Have you backed horses before?"

"Never."

"Then you have beginner's luck—we might do something with that." He looked at his watch. "Should we go now? We can just make it."

"Right." Since the business with the dog I had a lot of confidence in Gustav.

The betting place was a fairly large room; the right half was a cigar stall, on the left was the totalisator. The show window was hung full of green and pink sporting papers and tips. Along one wall ran a counter with writing materials. Behind it were three men in frenzied activity. One was shouting down the telephone, another was running to and fro with slips in his hands, and the third, a bowler hat on the back of his head, rolling a fat, black Brazilian cigar between his teeth, coatless, with sleeves rolled up, stood behind the counter noting the bets. His shirt was of the most intense violet.

To my surprise there was plenty of business. They were almost

exclusively little people, craftsmen, workers, small clerks, a few pros'titutes and various hangers-on.

At the door a chap with a dirty, grey mackintosh, grey bowler hat, and threadbare grey sports coat stopped us. "Von Bieling. Tips, gentlemen? Dead certs."

"Tell your grandmother," said Gustav, who had suddenly taken on a quite different expression.

"Only fifty pfennigs," urged Bieling. "Know the trainer personally. Out of the old days," he added at a glance from me.

Gustav was already studying the list of events. "When does the Auteuil come out?" he called across to the counter.

"Five o'clock," quacked the assistant.

"Philomene, fat old batch," growled Gustav. "Proper draft horse in sticky weather." He was already sweating with excitement. "What's the next?" he asked.

"Hoppegarten," said someone beside him.

Gustav studied further. "We'll put two bucks each on Tristan as a beginning," he announced to me. "Sure thing."

"Do you know anything about it, then?" I asked.

"Know anything?" Gustav answered. "I know every horse's hoof."

"And yet you're backing Tristan?" said someone alongside us. "Slippery Liz. man, your only chance. I know Johnny Burns personally."

"And I," retorted Gustav imperturbably, "am the owner of Slippery Liz's stable. I know better still."

He called out bets to the chap at the counter. We received a slip and sat down in the front of the hall where there were some tables and chairs. The air about us was humming with all manner of names. Some workmen were discussing horses racing at Nice, two postmen were studying the weather report from Paris, and an ex-coachman was reminiscing about the time when he drove in trotting races. Only one fat man with bristling hair sat indifferent at his table eating one bread roll after another. Two others were leaning against the wall watching him greedily. Each had a ticket in his hand, but their faces were haggard as if they had not eaten for days.

The telephone rang loudly. All ears pricked up. The assistant called out the names. Of Tristan not a word was to be heard.

"Damn," said Gustav and his face flushed. "Solomon's done it. Who'd have thought it, you?" he demanded of Slippery Liz. "You were well down

too—also ran."

Von Bieling appeared between us. "If you'd listened to me, gentlemen—I could have told you Solomon. Only Solomon. If you like, for the next race—"

Gustav was not even listening. He had comforted himself and was now involved in a technical discussion with Slippery Liz.

"Do you know about horses?" Bieling asked me.

"Not a thing," said I.

"Then back. Back. But only to-day," he added in a whisper, "and never again. Listen to me. You back—it doesn't matter what—King Lear or Silver Moth—or perhaps L'Heure Bleue. I don't want any money. Give me something if you win, that's all." His chin was trembling with the gambler's passion. I knew from poker the old rule: Beginners often win.

"All right," said I, "what on?"

"Whatever you like—whatever you like—"

"L'Heure Bleue doesn't sound bad to me," said I, "ten marks on L'Heure Bleue then."

"Are you cracked?" asked Gustav.

"No," said I.

"Ten of the best on that crock? She ought to have been sausage meat long ago."

Slippery Liz, whom Gustav himself had just been calling a poor sap, chimed in, talking big: "What's that? Backing Laura Blaue is he? That's a cow, not a horse, sir. May Dream could beat him on two legs if he wants to. *Compris?*"

Bieling looked at me imploringly, making signs. "*Compris,"* said I,

"Ach, man." Gustav looked at me as if I had turned into a Hottentot. "Gipsy II, any babe unborn knows that."

"I'm sticking to L'Heure Bleue," I announced. It would have been against all the mystic laws of gambling to change now.

The man with the lavender shirt handed me a slip. Gustav and Slippery Liz eyed me as if I had the plague. They moved off from me and elbowed to the counter, there with mutually scornful laughter, in which lurked nevertheless the respect of professionals for one another, to back Gipsy II and May Dream.

At that moment someone keeled over. It was one of the two thin fellows who a while ago had been standing by the tables. He slithered along the wall and crashed hard on the floor. The two postmen "picked him up and put him

on a chair. His face was greyish white. His mouth was open.

"Good Lord!" said a prostitute, a full, dark woman with smooth hair and a low forehead. "Fetch a glass of water, somebody."

It struck me how few people took any notice of the fainting man. The majority just gave a fleeting glance and then turned again to the betting.

"Happens all the time," said Gustav. "Unemployed. Bet away every bean. Always at long odds, hundred to one."

The coachman came out of the cigar department with a glass of water. The dark prositute dipped her handkerchief into it and wiped it over the man's forehead and temples. He sighed and suddenly opened his eyes. There was something uncanny about the way they were suddenly there again, without a sound, in the completely extinguished face—as if some other, unknown being peered, curious and inquisitive, through the slits of a rigid, grey-white mask.

The girl took the glass of water and gave the man a drink. As she did so she held him like a child in her arm. Then she reached a sandwich from the table of the unconcerned eater with the bristling hairs. "Come now, eat—but slowly, slowly. Don't bite my finger off—there, and now drink again."

The man at the table followed the sandwich with his eyes, but he said nothing. The other slowly regained colour. He ate a while longer, then staggered up. The girl supported him and pushed him toward the door. Then, with a swift glance behind, she undipped her handbag. "There— now hop it, and eat instead of betting."

One of the hangers-on who had kept his back turned all this time, turned around. He had the face of a bird of prey, with stand-off ears, and wore patent leather shoes and a sports cap.

"What did you give him?" he asked.

"Groschen."

He dug her in the chest with his elbow. "It was more than that. Ask me next time."

"Go easy, Ede," said another. The prostitute took out her powder box and rouged her lips. "It's true though," said Ede. The prostitute did not answer.

The telephone rang. I looked at Ede and could not make him out. "That's what is called a swine," I heard Gustav suddenly burst out. "That's more than a swine, ladies and gentlemen, that's a great, fat mother sow with twenty porkers." He clapped me on the shoulder. "A hundred and eighty marks you've rattled, my boy. Your camel with the funny name has done it."

"What, really?" I asked.

The chap with the chewed cigar and the brilliantly coloured shirt nodded sourly and took my ticket. "Who gave you the tip?"

"I did," said Bieling with a dreadfully cringing, expectant smile, coming forward with a bow. "I did, if I may venture—my connections—"

"Ach, man—" The fellow did not so much as look at him and paid me the money. For a moment there was complete silence in the room. Everybody watched. Even the imperturbable eater lifted his head.

I pocketed the notes. "Stop now," whispered Bieling. "No more." He had red spots on his cheeks. I pushed ten marks into his hand.

Gustav grinned and punched me in the ribs. "You see, what did I tell you? You've only to listen to Gustav to shovel up money."

I refrained from reminding the ex-Sergeant Stretcher-Bearer of Gipsy II. He appeared to have made his own reflections on that matter. "Let's go," said he. "To-day's not a good day for artists."

At the door someone plucked me by the sleeve. It was Slippery Liz. "What's your tip for the Maslowski Benefit race?" he asked, with covetous respect.

"O Tannenbaum," said I, and went with Gustav to the nearest pub to drink a glass to the health of L'Heure Bleue.

An hour later I had lost thirty marks again. I could not leave well alone. But then I did stop. As I went Bieling thrust a card into my hand. "If you ever want anything . . . Or your friends. I'm the representative." It was an advertisement for home cinemas. "I also negotiate the sale of left-off clothing," he called after me. "Cash."

About seven o'clock I returned to the workshop. Karl was standing in the yard roaring.

"Lucky you came, Bob," called Köster. "We're just going to run him in. Come."

The entire firm was standing by. Otto had changed and improved several details about Karl, because he wanted to enter him for a mountain climb in a fortnight's time. The first trial run was about to take place.

We climbed in. Jupp sat beside Köster, his immense goggles in front of his face. It would have broken his heart not to come. Lenz and I got in behind.

Karl darted off. We reached the long by-pass and opened out to a hundred and forty kilometres. Lenz and I huddled close under the back rests

of the seats in front; it was a wind to blow your head off. The poplars on either side bolted past and the wonderful sound of the engine thrilled in us like the wild cry of freedom.

A quarter of an hour later we sighted ahead a black point which rapidly grew larger. It was a fairly heavy car travelling at a speed of between eighty and a hundred kilometres. It was not holding the road particularly well, but swayed to and fro. The track was rather narrow. Köster accordingly slackened speed. When we were about a hundred metres distant and about to hoot, we suddenly saw a motorcyclist approaching from the right on a side road; immediately he vanished behind a haystack just before the crossing. "God! That's done it," called Lenz.

At the same moment a motorcyclist appeared on the road, twenty metres in front of the car. He had apparently underestimated the car's speed and was now trying to get past by sweeping round in front of it. The car pulled sharply to the left to get out of the way, but the motorcycle also now lurched to the left. The car was again jerked to the right, and the mudguard brushed the cycle, which flung round. The cyclist shot head over heels onto the road. The car skidded, failed to right itself, tore down the signpost, smashed a lamp standard and finally crashed into a tree.

It all happened in a couple of seconds. The next moment we, at our high speed, had already caught up with it; the tyres snarled, Köster steered Karl through like a horse among the cyclists, the bicycle, and the puffing car, now standing crosswise on the road; on the left he just missed the cyclist's hand, and on the right the carrier of the car; then the engine roared, Karl pulled again into the straight, the brakes shrieked, and all was still. "Well done, Otto," said Lenz.

We ran back and pulled open the doors of the car. The engine was still running. Köster reached for the switchboard and pulled out the key. The coughing of the engine died away and we heard someone groaning.

Every window of the heavy limousine was shattered. In the semidarkness of the interior we saw the face of a woman streaming with blood. Beside her was a man jammed between steering wheel and seat. We first lifted out the woman and laid her on the road. Her face was full of cuts, a few splinters were still sticking in it, but the blood flowed steadily. It was worse with her right arm. The sleeve of her white blouse was bright red and dripping fast. Lenz slit it up. A surge of blood flowed out, then went on pulsing. The artery was severed. Lenz twisted his handkerchief to a tourniquet. "Get the man out,

I'll be done here in a minute," said he. "We must get to the nearest hospital quickly."

To extricate the man we had to unscrew the back of the seat. Fortunately we had enough tools with us and it went pretty quickly. The man was bleeding likewise and apparently had some ribs broken. When we helped him out he dropped wfth a cry. There was something up with his knee too. But we could do nothing for it at the moment.

Köster drove Karl in reverse close up to the place of the accident. The woman screamed hysterically from fear, when she saw him coming so near, though he drove only at a walk. We put down the back of one of the front seats and so were able to let the man lie down. The woman we placed in the back seat. I took up a position beside her on the running board while Lenz held the man on the other side.

"You stay here and look after the car, Jupp," said Lenz.

"By the way, what's become of the cyclist?" I asked.

"Hopped it while we were busy," announced Jupp.

We drove off slowly. Not far from the next village was a small sanatorium. We had often seen it when passing. It lay white and low on a hillside. So far as we knew it was a sort of private asylum for mild, well-to-do patients—but there was sure to be a doctor there and some sort of dressing station.

We drove up the hill and rang. A very pretty nurse came out. She turned pale at the sight of the blood and ran back. Immediately a second, decidedly older one came.

"Sorry," said she at once, "we are not equipped for accidents. You must go to the Virchow Hospital. It's not far." "It's a good hour from here," replied Köster. The nurse looked her refusal. "We aren't equipped for this kind of thing. Besides, there's no doctor—"

"Then you're infringing the law," declared Lenz. "Private institutions of this kind must have a resident doctor. Would you allow me to use your telephone? I should like to speak to the police and one of the newspapers."

The nurse began to weaken. "I don't think you need worry," said Köster coldly. "Anything you do will certainly be well repaid. What we need is a stretcher. I expect you can get hold of a doctor all right."

She still hesitated. "A stretcher," explained Lenz, "is also statutory, and first aid material likewise—"

"Yes, yes," she replied hastily, evidently floored by so much information.

"I'll send someone at once."

She vanished.

"A bit tough," said I.

"Meet the same sort of thing in public hospitals," replied Lenz mildly. "First comes money, then red tape, then help."

We went back to the car and helped the woman out. She did not say anything, merely looked at her hands. We took her in to a small consulting room off the entrance. Then the stretcher arrived for the man. We lifted him on to it.

He groaned. "A moment—"

We looked at him. He closed his eyes.

"I don't want any trouble," said he, with difficulty.

"It wasn't your fault," replied Köster. "We witnessed the accident and will willingly give evidence for you."

"It's not that," said the man. "For other reasons, I don't want it known. You understand—" He glanced toward the door through which the woman had gone.

"Then you're in the right place here," explained Lenz. "This is a private show. All it wants now is for your car to disappear before the police spot it."

The man propped himself up. "Could you do that for me? Ring up some garage. And please let me have your address—I'd like—I'm very much obliged to you—"

Köster made a gesture of refusal.

"But yes," said the man, "I'd like to."

"Quite simple," replied Lenz. "We have a repair shop ourselves, and specialize in cars like yours. We'll take it along, if you agree, and put it in order again. That'll help you and us at the same time."

"Good," said the man. "Do you want my address—then I'll come myself and get the car. Or send somebody."

Köster put the visiting card in his pocket and we carried him in. The doctor, a young chap, had arrived in the meantime. He had washed the blood from the woman's face and the deep cuts were now visible. The woman lifted herself on her sound arm and stared into the shining nickel of a bowl on the dressing trolley. "Oh," said she softly and dropped back with horror-stricken eyes.

We drove to the village and enquired for a garage. It was a smithy and from the blacksmith we borrowed a breakdown outfit and a hawser, promising him twenty marks for the loan. But he was suspicious and wanted to see the car. We took him with us and drove back.

Jupp was standing in the middle of the road and waving. But without that, we saw already what was the trouble. An old, top-heavy Mercedes was standing by the roadside and four people were in the act of getting away with the Stutz.

"We've arrived in nice time," said Köster.

"That's the brothers Vogt," replied the blacksmith. "Dangerous crew. Live over there. They don't give up what they once get their fingers on."

"We'll see about that," said Köster.

"I've explained it all to them already, Herr Köster," whispered Jupp. "Dirty rivals. Want to have the car for their own shop."

"Very good, Jupp. You stay here for the time being."

Köster went up to the biggest of the four and addressed him. He explained that the car belonged to us.

"Have you got anything hard on you?" I asked Lenz.

"Only a bunch of keys, and I want that myself. Get a small spanner."

"Better not," said I, "might do real damage. Pity I have such light shoes. Otherwise kicking might be best."

"Coming in?" Lenz asked the blacksmith. "Then we'll be four against four."

"I'm keeping out. Don't want my show smashed up to-morrow. I'm strictly neutral."

"Quite right," said Lenz.

"I'm with you," announced Jupp.

"Don't you be rash," said I. "See that nobody comes, that's enough."

The blacksmith retired from us a space farther to emphasize his strict neutrality.

"Don't you talk tripe," I suddenly heard the biggest of the brothers Vogt growl at Köster. "First in, first served. Finish. Now you shove off."

Köster explained once more that the car belonged to us. He offered to drive Vogt to the sanatorium to find out for himself. Vogt grinned contemptuously. Lenz and I came nearer. "Perhaps you'd like to go to the hospital yourself?" asked Vogt.

Köster did not answer, but walked up to the car. The other three Vogts

straightened up. They were now standing close together.

"Give that trolley here," said Köster to us.

"Man—" replied the eldest Vogt. He was a head taller than Köster.

"Sorry," said Köster, "but we're going to take the car."

Lenz and I sauntered still nearer, hands in our pockets. Köster bent down to the car. At the same moment Vogt rooted him aside with a kick. Otto had reckoned with that; the same instant he had seized the leg and flung Vogt down. Then he leapt up and hit the next of the brothers, who had just raised the starting handle, in the belly so that he reeled and fell likewise. The next moment Lenz and I jumped for the other two. I stopped one in the face at once. It was not bad but my nose started to bleed, my next punch missed its mark and glanced off the other's greasy chin, then I got a second wipe in the eye and guarded so ill that with a belly punch the Vogt brought me down. He pressed me upon the asphalt and gripped my throat. I tensed the muscles so that he should not choke me and tried to bend and roll over in order to shove him off with my feet or to kick him in the guts. But Lenz and his Vogt were struggling on top of my legs and I could not get free. Despite the taut neck muscles I had difficulty in breathing; I could not get air because of my bleeding nose. Gradually everything turned glassy around me. Vogt's face quivered before my face like jelly, and I felt black shadows in the back of my brain. With a last glance I saw Jupp suddenly beside me—he was kneeling in the gutter by the roadside, calmly and attentively watching my struggles, and when the final pause seemed to have made all ready for him, struck Vogt's wrist with a hammer. At the second blow Vogt let go and from the ground made a fierce grab at Jupp, who slipped back a foot or so and in all calmness landed him a third on the fingers and then one on the head. I came up, rolled on top of Vogt, and in my turn set about strangling him.

At that moment there was a wild animal bellow and then a whimpering: "Let go—let go!"

It was the eldest Vogt. Köster had twisted his arm and forced it up his back. Vogt had gone down with his head to the ground and Köster was now kneeling on him and twisting the arm farther. Vogt yelled, but Köster knew that he must finish him properly if we were to be left in peace. With a sudden jerk he wrenched his arm and then let him go. Vogt remained awhile lying on the ground. I looked up. One of the brothers was still standing, but his brother's cries had taken the fight out of him. "You clear out, or I'll start over again," said Köster to him.

I gave my Vogt's head a farewell bump on the road and then let him go. Lenz was already standing by Köster. His coat was torn, he was bleeding from the corner of his mouth. The battle had apparently been a draw, for his 'Vogt, though bleeding also, was standing. The surrender of the eldest brother had settled the lot. None of them ventured a word. They helped the eldest up and went to their car. The uninjured one returned and collected the starting handle. He looked at Köster as if he were the devil. Then the Mercedes rattled off.

Suddenly the blacksmith was there again. "They've had enough," said he. "Nothing like it has happened to them in a long time. The eldest has done time already for manslaughter."

Nobody answered. Köster suddenly shook himself. "Dirty business," said he. Then he turned round. "Come on, get busy."

"I've started," answered Jupp, already trundling up the breakdown trolley.

"Here a minute," said I. "From to-day on you are a Lance Corporal and can start cigarette smoking."

We heaved the car up and made it fast with the wire rope behind Karl.

"Do you think it won't damage him?" I asked Köster.

"After all he's a race horse, not a pack-mule."

He shook his head. "It's not so far. And level going."

Lenz sat in the Stutz and we drove slowly off. I held my handkerchief to my nose and looked out over the evening fields and into the sinking sun. There was an immense, un-shakeable peace in it, and one felt how utterly indifferent nature was to anything that this evil-tempered ant-heap called humanity might choose to do in the world. Far more important was it that the clouds now turned gradually to a range of golden mountains, that the purple shadows of twilight drifted in noiselessly from the horizon, that the larks turned home from the boundless space of the sky to their place in the furrow, and that it slowly became night.

We drove into our courtyard. Lenz climbed out of the Stutz and festively took off his hat to it. "Greetings, well beloved! You come to us by a sad mischance, but with any luck you should bring us in, at a superficial estimate, between three thousand and three thousand five hundred marks. And now give me a large cherry brandy and a cake of soap—I must get rid of the Vogt family."

We all had a glass and then set to work at once taking the Stutz apart as far as possible. It was not always enough that the owner alone should give one a repair job—often the insurance company would come along afterwards to place the car elsewhere, with one of its subsidiary shops. So the further we could get the better for us. The costs of reassembling would then be so high that it would be cheaper to leave the car with us.

It was dark when we stopped.

"Are you taking the taxi out to-night?" I asked Lenz.

"Certainly not," replied Gottfried. "One shouldn't overdo this money-making business. The Stutz is enough for me for one day."

"Not for me," said I. "If you're not driving, then I'll graze the night clubs from eleven to two."

"You let it be." grinned Gottfried. "Look in the glass instead. You've been having bad luck with your nose lately. Nobody would ride with you with a beetroot like that. Go home quietly and put it in a cold compress."

He was right. It really was impossible, with my nose. So I shortly took my leave and went home. On the way I met Hasse and walked the last bit with him. He looked dusty and miserable.

"You've got thinner," said I.

He nodded, and told me that he never got proper meals at night now. Almost every day his wife spent with friends she had found, and didn't come home till late. He was glad for her to have the entertainment, but he had no inclination to cook for himself alone when he got in at night. And anyway he wasn't very hungry; he was too tired for that.

I looked at him as he walked beside me with drooping shoulders. Perhaps he really believed what he said, but it was pitiful to listen to. It was only for the want of a little bit of security, a little bit of money, that this marriage, this humble, inoffensive life, had foundered. I thought of the millions there were like him, and that it was always only for the little bit of security and the little bit of money. In a revolting way, life had shrunk to a miserable battle for bare existence. I thought of the fight that afternoon, I thought of what I had seen these last weeks; I thought of all the things I had tried already; and then I thought of Pat and suddenly had the feeling that the gulf could never be bridged. The leap was too wide, life had become too dirty for happiness, it couldn't last, one didn't believe in it any more; this was only

a breathing space, not a harbour.

We climbed up the stairs and opened the door. On the landing Hasse stopped. "Well, *au revoir*—"

"You eat something to-night," said I.

He shook his head with a feeble smile, as if to ask pardon for himself, and went into his empty, dark room. I looked after him. Then I went on along the tube of the corridor. Suddenly I heard soft singing. I stopped and listened. It was not, as I first thought, Erna Bönig's gramophone; it was Pat's voice. She was alone in her room singing. I looked across toward the door behind which Hasse had vanished, I bent down and listened, and then suddenly I pressed my hands together. Damn it all, breathing space or no breathing space, harbour or no harbour, be they sundered so far that they will never be bridged, never be believed—for that very reason, because one could not believe it, for that reason was if always so bewilderingly new and overwhelming—happiness.

Pat did not hear me come in. She was sitting on the floor in front of the looking-glass trying on a hat, a little black cap. Beside her on the carpet stood the lamp. The room was filled with a warm, golden brown twilight, and only her face was brightly lit from the lamp. She had drawn up a-chair, from which hung down a bit of silk. On the seat lay a pair of scissors gleaming.

I remained quietly standing in the door and watched her gravely working at the cap. She was fond of sitting on the floor and I had often before found her fallen asleep in some corner on the floor, a book beside her, and the dog.

The dog was beside her now and started to growl. Pat looked up and saw me in the mirror. She smiled, and it seemed to me that the whole world became brighter by it. I crossed "the room, knelt down behind her, and, after all the filth of the day, put my lips on the warm, smooth skin of the neck before me.

She held up the black cap. "I've altered it, darling. Do you like it?"

"It is a perfectly lovely hat," said I.

"But you're not even looking. I've cut the brim away behind and turned up the front."

"I can see that quite clearly," said I, with my face in her hair, "it is a hat to make a Paris milliner green with envy if she could see it."

"But Robby!" Laughing, she pushed me back. "You haven't any idea about it at all. I wonder sometimes if you ever see what I have on."

"I see every little detail," I declared sitting close beside her on the floor, though a bit in the shadow on account of my nose.

"So? Then what did I have on last night?"

"Last night?" I meditated. I actually did not know!

"Just what I expected, darling. You don't know anything at all about me."

"True," said I; "but that is what makes it so nice. The more we know one another, the more we misunderstand one another. And the nearer we know one another, the more estranged we become. Look at the Hasses, for instance — they know everything about each other and yet are more distasteful to one another than total strangers."

She put on the little black cap and examined it in the mirror. "What you said then is only half-true, Robby."

"That's the way with all truths," I replied. "We never get further than that. That's what makes us human. And

God knows we make trouble with our half-truths. With the whole truth we couldn't live at all."

She took off the hat and put it away. Then she turned round, and, as she did so, caught sight of my nose. "What's this?" she asked, alarmed.

"Nothing serious. It only looks so. When I was working under the car something dropped on me."

She eyed me incredulously. "Goodness knows where you've been. You never tell me anything, do you? I know as little of you as you do of me."

"And that's the best way," said I.

She fetched a basin of water and a cloth and made me a compress. Then she contemplated me once more.

"It looks like a punch. And your neck is scratched too. You've had some adventure or other, darling."

"My biggest adventure to-day is still to come," said I.

She looked at me surprised. "So late, Robby? Are you going out, then?"

"I'm staying here," I replied, throwing the compress away and taking her in my arms. "I'm staying here with you the whole evening."

Chapter XX

August was warm and clear, and in September too the weather was still almost summery—but then, toward the end of September, it started to rain. Clouds hung low all day over the city, the eaves dripped, then the storms began and, one Sunday when I waked early and went to the window, I saw in the trees of the graveyard sulphur-yellow flecks and the first bare branches.

I remained some time standing at the window. It had been curious, these months since we had come back from the sea; I had always, every hour, been conscious that Pat must go away in the autumn, but I had known it as one knows so many things—that the years are passing, that one is getting older, that one cannot live forever. The present had been stronger; it had always thrust aside every other thought, and as long as Pat was there, and the trees still green, words such as "autumn" and "going away" and "parting" had been no more than pale shadows on the horizon, making one feel only the more intensely the joy of being near, of being still together.

I looked out on the damp, rain-drenched graveyard, at the gravestones covered with dirty, brown leaves.

Like some bloodless beast the mist overnight had sucked the green sap from the leaves of the trees; feeble and limp they hung from the twigs; each new gust of wind that passed through them tore off fresh ones, and drove them before it—and like a sharp, cutting pain I was suddenly aware for the first time that the parting would soon be there, soon become a reality, even as the autumn that had crept through the tree tops outside and left behind its yellow traces had become a reality.

I listened into the next room. Pat was still asleep. I went to the door and stood there awhile. She was sleeping quietly, not coughing. For an instant a sudden hope rose up: I pictured to myself that to-day, or to-morrow, or in the next few days, Jaffé would ring up to tell me she need not go away. Then I remembered the nights when I had heard the rustle of her breathing, the regular, muffled, grating noise that came and went like the sound of a very distant, thin saw—and the hope was extinguished again as swiftly as it had flickered up.

I went back to the window and again looked out into the rain. Then I sat

down at the writing-table and began counting my money. I reckoned how long it would last for Pat, but that made me miserable and I shut it away again.

I looked at the clock. It was shortly before seven. It wanted at least two hours before Pat would wake. So I hastily dressed to go out and do a bit more driving. That was better than sitting about in the room with one's thoughts.

I went to the garage, took out the cab, and drove slowly through the streets. There were few people about. In the working-class districts the long rows of apartment houses stood bald and desolate, like sad old pros'titutes, in the rain. The fronts were decayed and dirty, the murky windows stared cheerlessly in the morning light, and the peeling plaster of the walls showed in many places deep, yellow-grey holes, as if they had the pox.

I made my way across the Old Town to the cathedral. I pulled the car up outside the little entry and got out. Through the heavy oak door I heard the subdued peal of the organ. It was the hour of morning Mass, and I listened to the organ which had just begun the offertory—that meant it would be twenty minutes at least before the Mass ended and the people came out.

I went into the cloister garden. It lay in grey light. The rosebushes were dripping with rain, but most were still loaded with blooms. My raincoat was fairly big and I could hide under it the sprays I cut off. Though it was Sunday nobody came, and I took out the first armful of roses to the car unhindered. Then I went back for another. Just as I had got them safely stowed under my coat, I heard somebody coming through the cloister. I clamped the bunch tightly against me with my arm and remained standing before one of the Stations of the Cross, as if lost in prayer.

The footsteps came nearer; they did not pass, they stopped. I began to feel a bit hot. I gazed at the stone picture with an air of deep reverence, made the sign of the Cross, and walked slowly toward the next Station, which was nearer the exit. The footsteps followed me and stopped again. I didn't know what to do. I could not move on immediately; I should have to stick it long enough to say at least ten Ave Marias and a paternoster—else I should give myself away at once. So I continued to stand there and looked up cautiously to see what was up, with a disapproving expression as if I had been interrupted in my devotions.

I looked into the friendly, round face of a priest and breathed again. I knew he would not interrupt me while I was praying and was already counting myself saved when I noticed that unfortunately I had picked on the last Station. No matter how slowly I might pray, I would have to be through in

a few minutes, and that was what he was waiting for, obviously. There was no point prolonging the business. So I walked off slowly and unperturbed toward the exit.

"Good morning," said the priest. "Jesus Christ be praised."

"Forever, amen," I responded. That was the Catholic greeting.

"It is unusual to see anyone here at this time," said he amiably, looking at me out of bright, blue, childlike eyes.

I mumbled something.

"Very unusual, unfortunately," he went on, rather troubled. "Men especially one hardly ever sees doing the Stations. For that reason I rejoice over you, and have ventured to speak to you. You have some special request I am sure, that brings you so early and in this weather."

Yes, that you go away, thought I, and nodded, relieved. So far he seemed not to have noticed the flowers. The thing now was to get shot of him quickly so that he might not notice them.

He smiled at me again. "I am just about to read my Mass. I will include your request in my prayers."

"Thanks," said I, surprised and embarrassed.

"Is it for the soul of someone departed?" he asked.

I stared at him a moment and my flowers began to slip. "No," said I then quickly, pressing my arm firmly against my coat.

He looked into my face innocently searching with his clear eyes. He was waiting apparently for me to tell him what it was about. But nothing suitable occurred to me on the spur of the moment, and besides I had something against telling him any more lies than were necessary. So I said nothing.

"Then I will pray for help in trouble for someone unknown," said he at last.

"Yes," I replied, "if you would do that. And I thank you very much."

He smiled. "You don't need to thank me. We are every one of us in God's hands." He looked at me a moment, his head bowed a little to one side, and it seemed as if something passed over his face. "Only trust," said he. "The Heavenly Father helps. He always helps, even when sometimes we do not understand." Then he nodded to me and went.

I followed him with my eyes until I heard the door shut behind him. Yes, thought I, if it were so simple. He helps, He always helps—but did He help Bernhard Wiese when he lay wounded in the .stomach, yelling in Houthoulst Wood? Did He help Katczinsky, who fell at Handzaeme, leaving a sick wife

and a child he had never seen? Did He help Müller and Leer and Kemmerich? Did He help little Friedmann and Jurgens and Berger, and millions more? No, damn it, too much blood had flowed in the world for that sort of belief in the Heavenly Father.

I took the flowers home, then I drove the car to the workshop and walked back. From the kitchen was now issuing the smell of freshly brewed coffee and I heard Frida rumbling about. It was curious, but the smell of coffee made me more cheerful. I knew that from the war; it was never the big things that consoled one—it was always the unimportant, the little things.

I had hardly closed the passage door when Hasse shot out of his room. His face was yellow and puffy, his eyes red and stained, and he looked as if he had slept in his clothes. When he caught sight of me an immense disappointment passed over his face.

"Ach, so, it's you," he murmured.

I looked at him in surprise. "Were you expecting somebody at this time?"

"Yes," said he softly, "my wife. She hasn't come home yet. Haven't you seen her?"

I shopk my head. "I've only been out an hour."

He nodded. "I just thought—you might have happened to see her."

I gave a shrug. "She'll probably be in later. Didn't she telephone?"

He looked at me a bit embarrassed. "She went last night to her friends. I don't know where they live."

"Do you know the name, then? In that case you could ask 'Enquiries.'"

"I've tried that already. They don't know the name."

He had the expression of a beaten dog. "She was always so mysterious about the people; if I so much as asked she would flare up at once. So I let her alone. I was glad she had someone to go to. She was always saying, surely I didn't grudge her that too."

"Perhaps she'll come yet," said I. "In fact I'm pretty certain she'll come soon. Have you tried the casualty wards and the police? You never know."

He nodded. "Everything. They know nothing."

"Well, in that case," said I, "you don't need to get excited. Perhaps she didn't feel well during the evening and has stayed the night. That sort of thing often happens. She'll probably be here again in an hour or two."

"Do you think so?"

The kitchen door opened and Frida appeared with a tray. "Who's that for?" I asked.

"For Fräulein Hollmann," she replied, slightly incensed at my glance.

"Is she up then?"

"She must be, of course," retorted Frida promptly, "else she wouldn't have rung for breakfast."

"God bless you," I replied. "You're a perfect angel some mornings, Frida. Do you think you could bring yourself to make my coffee right away too?"

She growled something and strode off down the passage, wagging her bottom contemptuously as she went. She was good at that. I had never seen anybody who could put so much expression into it.

Hasse had waited. I was suddenly ashamed when I turned and saw him there beside me, so resigned and still.

"All your troubles will be over in an hour or two," said I, offering him my hand.

He did not take it, but looked at me strangely. "Do you think we could look for her?" he asked softly.

"But you don't even know where she is!"

"Still, one could look for her, perhaps," he repeated. "If we took your car —I would pay everything, of course," he added hastily.

"That's not the point," I replied. "It's just hopeless. Where would we drive to? She wouldn't be about the street at this hour."

"I don't know," said he, still ever so softly. "I only thought we could try."

Frida came back with the empty tray. "I must go now," said I, "and I think you are worrying unnecessarily. Still, I'd willingly do you the favour, but Fräulein Hollmann has to go away soon and I rather wanted to be with her to-day. This is perhaps her last Sunday here. You will understand, I'm sure?"

He nodded.

It pained me the way he stood there, but I was impatient to get to Pat. "But if you want to go off immediately, you can always get a taxi below, of course," I went on, "but I don't advise it. You wait a bit, rather—then I can ring up my friend Lenz and he'll look with you."

I had the feeling he wasn't listening.

"You did not see her this morning?" he then asked suddenly.

"No," said I, mystified. "Else I would have told you long ago."

He nodded again and then went absently, without a word, back into his room.

Pat had already been into my room and found the flowers. She laughed as she came back. "Robby," she said, "I am innocent, though. Frida has just been telling me that fresh roses on Sunday morning early, at this time of year, must have something to do with stealing. She told me too this sort isn't to be had in any of the florists about here."

"Think what you like," I replied. "The main thing is that they give you some pleasure."

"More now than ever, darling. You've run a risk to get them."

"Yes, and what risk!" I thought of the priest. "But what are you doing up so early?"

"I couldn't sleep any more. And besides I dreamed. Nothing nice."

I glanced at her. She looked tired and had shadows under the eyes. "Since when have you been dreaming like that?" said I. "I thought that was my specialty."

She shook her head. "Did you see that autumn has arrived outside?"

"With us that's called late summer," I replied. "Why, the roses are still flowering. It is raining, that's all I can see."

"It is raining," she repeated. "It has been raining for too long already, darling. At night sometimes when I wake, I imagine I'm quite buried under all the rain."

"You must come to me at night," said I. "Then you won't have such thoughts any more. On the contrary, it's nice if you're with somebody and it's dark and it's raining outside."

"Perhaps," she replied leaning against me.

"I quite like it when it rains on a Sunday," said I. "You see then so much better how lucky you are. We're here together, have a good warm room and a free day ahead—that seems to me a lot already."

Her face brightened. "Yes, we are lucky, aren't we?"

"It seems to me we are marvellously lucky. When I think of before—my God I I never thought I would be so lucky again."

"It's lovely when you say that. Then I believe it too. You must say it oftener."

"Don't I say it often enough?"

"No."

"Maybe," said I. "I think I'm not very loving. I don't know why, but I just

can't be. Yet I would like to be."

"You don't have to be, darling, I understand you as you are. Only sometimes one does like to hear it, all the same."

"From now on I'll tell you every time. Even though it makes me feel absurd."

"Ach, absurd," she replied. "In love there is nothing absurd."

"No, thank God," said I. "Otherwise it would be dreadful to think what it turns you into."

We had breakfast together, then Pat lay down in bed again. Jaffé had ordered it so. "Will you stay here?" she. asked from under her covers.

"If you like," said I.

"Of course, I like; but you don't have to—"

I sat down by the bed. "I didn't mean it that way. I only remember you said once you didn't like people watching while you were asleep."

"Once, yes—but now I'm frightened sometimes, by my-• self."

"I was that way too, once. In hospital, after an operation. I used to be frightened to go to sleep at night. I would always stay awake and read or think about something, and only fall asleep when it grew light. But that passes."

She laid her cheek on my hand. "You get frightened you won't come back, Robby."

"Yes," said I, "but you do come back, and it passes. I'm proof of it. You always come back—if not quite to the same place."

"That's just it," she replied already a bit sleepy, her eyes half-closed. "I'm afraid of that too. But you'll see to it, won't you?"

"I'll see to it," said I, stroking her forehead and her hair, which also seemed to be tired. "I'm an old, wakeful soldier."

She breathed deeper and turned a bit on her side. A minute later she was fast asleep.

I sat by the window and looked again out into the rain. It was now driving in grey gusts past the window panes, and the house was like a little island in the endless dreariness. I was anxious, for it was rare for Pat to be dispirited and sad in the morning. But then I remembered that only a few days ago she had been still lively and gay, and that it would perhaps be all different when she woke again. I knew she thought a lot about her illness, and I knew too from Jaffé that it had not improved—but I had seen so many dead in my time, that any illness was for me still life and hope. I knew a man could die from wounds—I had had ample experience of that—but for that very reason I

often found it hard to believe that an illness in which one remained exteriorly whole could be dangerous too. So I always got fairly quickly over such attacks of depression.

There was a light knock on the door. I went across and opened. Hasse was standing outside. I put a finger to my lips and went out into the passage.

"Excuse me," he stammered.

"Come into my room," said I and opened the door.

Hasse stopped on the threshold. His face seemed to have become smaller. It was white as chalk. "I only wanted to tell you, we don't need to go out any more," said he almost without moving his lips.

"It's all right, come in," I replied. "Fräulein Holl-mann's asleep, I have time."

He had a letter in his hand and looked like a man who had been shot but still imagined it had been only a blow. "You read it, if you don't mind," said he and handed me the letter.

"Have you had coffee yet?" I asked.

He shook his head. "Read the letter—"

I went out and gave Frida the order. Then I read the letter. It was from Frau Hasse and consisted of a few lines. She informed him that she meant to get something out of life still, so she was not coming back any more. There was somebody who understood her better than Hasse. It was no use his trying to do anything about it; she wouldn't come back under any circumstances. It was best for him too probably. He wouldn't have to worry any more now if his salary was enough or not. She had taken part of her things—she would collect the rest when it was convenient.

It was a clear, matter-of-fact letter. I folded it and gave it back to Hasse. He looked at me as if everything depended on me.

"What should I do?" he asked.

"First of all drink this cup, and then have something to eat," said I. "There's no point running around and knocking yourself up. Then we'll think about it. You must try and get quite calm, then you'll make the best decision."

Obediently he emptied the cup. His hand shook and he could eat nothing. "What shall I do?" he asked again.

"Nothing at all," said I. "Wait."

He made a movement.

"What do you want to do, then?" I asked.

"I don't know. I can't grasp it."

I said nothing. It was difficult to say anything to him. One could only reassure him; the rest he must find for himself. He did not love the woman any more, that was obvious—but he was used to her, and for a bookkeeper habit can be more than love.

After a while he started to talk, confused stuff that only showed how he was shaken. Then he began blaming himself. He did not say one word against his wife. He only tried to make it quite clear that the fault was his.

"Hasse," said I, "what you're saying is just nonsense. In these things there is neither guilt nor innocence. Your wife has left you, not you her. You've no need to blame yourself."

"Oh, yes," he replied and looked at his hands. "I haven't made a do of it."

"What?"

"I haven't made a do of it. That's something for blame, not to make a do."

I glanced in surprise at the pitiful little figure in the red plush armchair.

"Hasse," said I then, quietly, "that may be a reason, if you like, but not a matter for blame. And anyway you have made-a do of it, up to now."

He shook his head vigorously. "No, no, I drove my wife crazy with my everlasting fear of getting the sack. And I haven't made a do of it. What was I able to offer her? Nothing-"

He sank into a brown study. I got up and fetched the cognac bottle.

"Let's have a drink," said I. "Nothing is lost yet."

He raised his head.

"Nothing is lost yet," I repeated. "A human being is lost only when he is dead."

He nodded hastily and reached for the glass. But he put it down again without drinking.

"I was made head clerk yesterday," said he softly. "Chief accountant and head clerk. The manager told me last night. I got it because I worked overtime all these last months. They've merged two offices. The other head clerk has been sacked. I get a rise of fifty marks." He suddenly looked at me desperately. "Do you think she would have stayed if she'd known that?"

"No," said I.

"Fifty marks more. I could have given them to her. She would have been able to buy things for herself. And I have twelve hundred marks in the savings bank, too. What was the use of saving now? I wanted to have something to

put by for her, if things went bad with us. And now she has gone away because I did save for that."

He stared ahead once more. "Hasse," said I, "I believe that has less to do with it than you think. You mustn't brood over it, that's all. You've only to get over the next few days. Then you'll know better what you want to do. Your wife may even be^back here this evening, or to-morrow. She will be thinking about it just as you-are."

"She will never come back," he answered.

"You don't know that."

"If I could tell her that I had got a rise and that we could have a holiday and take a trip on the savings—"

"You'll be able to tell her all that. People don't part just like that, you know."

It surprised me that he did not seem to recognise at all that there was another man in the show. But he had apparently not got that far; he only knew that his wife was gone —all the rest lay hidden still behind a dim mist. I should have liked to tell him that in a week or two he would perhaps even be glad she was gone—but to have said so now in the midst of his trouble seemed to me unnecessarily brutal. The truth is always too brutal, almost intolerable, to injured feelings.

I talked with him a while longer—only to let him talk I did not achieve anything—he merely went round in circles, but I had the feeling he was a bit calmer. And he drank a cognac. Then I heard Pat call next door.

"One moment," said I and got up.

"Yes," he replied like an obedient child and stood up likewise.

"You stay, I'll be back in a minute."

"Forgive me—"

"I'll be back immediately," said I and went in to Pat.

She was sitting upright in bed and looked fresh and well. "I've had a wonderful sleep, Robby. Is it midday already?"

"You have been asleep exactly one hour," said I and showed her the watch.

She looked at the hands. "So much the better; we have lots of time to ourselves still. I'll get up at once."

"Fine. I'll come again in ten minutes."

"Have you a visitor?"

"Hasse," said I. "But it won't take long."

I went back, but Hasse was not there. I opened the door into the corridor, but the passage was also empty. I went down the passage and knocked on his door. He did not answer. I opened the door and saw him standing by the chest of drawers. Some of the drawers were pulled out.

"Hasse," said I, "take a sleeping draught and lie down and sleep on the business awhile. You're overexcited now."

He turned slowly toward me. "Always alone, every night! Sitting around always like last night; think of it."

I told him that would soon change, that there were lots of people who were alone at night. He made no real response. I told him again he should go to sleep, perhaps it would all turn out quite harmless yet and his wife be back by evening. He nodded and gave me his hand.

"I'll look in again this evening," said I and went. I was glad to get away.

Pat had the newspaper spread out before her. "We could go to the museum this morning, Robby," she suggested.

"To the museum?" I asked.

"Yes. There's an exhibition of Persian Carpets. You haven't often been to the museum, perhaps?"

"Never," I replied. "What should I be doing there?"

"True," said she laughing.

"But that doesn't matter." I stood up. "In wet weather you can afford to do something for your education."

We dressed and went. The air outside was lovely. It smelt of the forest and dampness. As we passed the International I saw through the open door Rosa sitting by the bar. It being Sunday, she had her cup of chocolate in front of her. On the table lay a little parcel. Evidently she intended going afterwards to see her child as usual. It was a long time since I had been in the International, and it struck me as odd that Rosa should still be sitting there, placid as ever. So much had changed with me that I thought it must have been so everywhere else.

We arrived at the museum. I had supposed we would be pretty much alone, but to my amazement there were a great number of people there. I asked a warder what was doing.

"Nothing," he replied. "It's always like this on free days."

"You see," said Pat. "There are still lots of people who are interested in

such things."

The warder pushed his cap back on his head. "It's not quite that way, lady. They are mostly unemployed. They don't come for the art, but because there's nothing else they can do. Here they do at least have something to look at."

"That is an explanation I understand better," said I.

"This is nothing yet," replied the warder. "You should come in the winter, though. It's jam full everywhere then. On account of the heating."

We went to the gallery where the carpets were hanging. It was a quieter room, off the beaten track. Through the tall windows you could look out into a garden, where there was an immense plane tree. It was quite yellow, and even the light in the room had a subdued yellow glow because of it.

The carpets looked wonderful. There were two animal carpets of the sixteenth century, some Ispahans, and a few silk, lacquerlike Polish carpets with emerald-green borders. Age and the sun had lent to their tones a soft patina, so that they resembled great, fairylike pastels. They gave to the room a timelessness and a harmony, such as pictures could never have given. The window with the autumn foliage of the plane tree and the pearl-grey sky behind joined in, as if it also were an old carpet.

We remained there some time, then went back into the other galleries of the museum. In the interval more people had arrived, and it was now obvious that they did not really belong here. With pale faces and threadbare clothes, they wandered, hands behind their backs, rather diffidently through the rooms, with eyes that were seeing something far other than the Renaissance pictures and the still, marble antique figures. Many were sitting on the red upholstered seats that were placed around. They sat wearily there, as if prepared to stand up at once, should anyone come to move them on. You could see in their attitudes that upholstered seats were something which it was quite incredible it should cost nothing to sit on. They were used to receiving nothing for nothing.

It was very quiet in all the rooms, and despite all the visitors one hardly heard a word; and yet it seemed to me as if I were looking on at an enormous struggle—the soundless struggle of men who were stricken down, but did not mean to give in yet. They had been thrown out from the fields of their work, their striving, their callings; now they had pome into the quiet rooms of Art, in order not to fall into paralysis and despair. They were thinking of bread, always and only of bread and occupation; but they came here to escape from

their thoughts for a few hours—and amongst the clean-cut Roman heads and the imperishable grace of white, Greek female figures they wandered around with the dragging gait, the bowed shoulders of men who have no purpose—a shocking contrast, a cheerless picture of what humanity had been able, and unable, to achieve in a thousand years—the summit of eternal works of art, but not even bread enough for each of their brothers.

In the afternoon we went to a movie. When we came out the sky had cleared. It was apple-green and very bright. In the streets and shops, lights were already burning. We walked slowly home, looking in the windows as we went.

Before the brightly lit window of a big furrier's I halted. It was already cool in the evenings, and here were displayed thick bundles of silver fox and warm coats for the winter. I looked at Pat; she was still wearing her short fur jacket and was altogether much too lightly clad.

"If I were the hero in the film," said I, "I would go in there and choose a coat for you."

She smiled. "Which then?"

"That one." I pointed to the one that looked warmest.

She laughed. "You've good taste, Robby. That is a very lovely Canadian mink."

"Would you like to have it?"

She looked at me. "Do you know what a coat like that costs, darling?"

"No," said I, "and I don't want to know. I would sooner think I could give you whatever I like. Why should only other people be able to do that?"

She looked at me closely. "But I don't want any such coat, Robby."

"Oh, yes," I replied, "you're going to have it. Let's not have another word about it. We'll have it sent to-morrow."

She smiled. "Thank you, darling," said she, and kissed me in the middle of the street. "And now your turn." She stopped outside a gentlemen's outfitters. "Those tails nowl You'll need that to go with the mink. And that bell-topper you must have, too. What would you look like in a bell-topper, I wonder?"

"Like a chimneysweep." I looked at the tails. They lay spread in a window lined with grey velvet. I looked again at the shop. It was the same in which I had bought the tie in the spring, after that first time I had been alone with her ahd had got drunk. Suddenly, I don't know why, I had a choking feeling in the throat. In the spring—I little dreamed of all this then.

I took Pat's slender hand and for a second laid it to my cheek. "You need something with it too." said I then; "a mink by itself like that is like a car without an engine. Two or three evening dresses—"

"Evening dresses," she replied stopping in front of a large window, "evening dresses, that's true—I can't very well do without them."

We selected three wonderful dresses. I saw how Pat enjoyed this game. She entered into it completely, for evening dresses were her weakness. We chose also at the same time the things to go with them, and she became even more lively. Her eyes were shining. I stood by and listened to her and laughed and thought what a damned business it was to love a woman and yet be poor.

"Come," said I at last, in a sort of desperate gaiety, "if you do a thing you might as well do it thoroughly." I led her to a jeweller's. "There, that emerald bracelet. The two rings, and the earrings to match. No argument now. Emerald is the right stone for you."

"Then you must have that platinum watch and the pearl studs there for your shirt."

"And you the whole shop. Less than that, and I have nothing to do with it."

She laughed and with a deep sigh leaned against me. "Enough, darling, enough. Now we have to buy only a few trunks and go to the travel bureau, and then we will pack and set off, away from this city and autumn and the rain."

Yes, thought I; my God, yes, and then you would soon get well. "Where shall we go?" I asked. "To Egypt? Or farther still? To India, or China?"

"Into the sun, darling, anywhere in the sun and the South and the warm. Roads with palm trees, rocks, white houses by the sea and aloes . . . But perhaps it rains there too. Perhaps it rains everywhere."

"In that case we just move on," said I, "till we come to some place where it doesn't rain—in the middle of the tropics or the Pacific Islands."

We stopped in front of the window of the Hamburg-Amerika Line. In the middle was the model of a liner. It floated on blue papier-mache waves and immense behind it rose an enlarged photograph of the skyscrapers of Manhattan. Around the window hung big, brightly coloured maps with routes marked in red.

"We'll go to America too," said Pat. "To Kentucky and Texas and New York and San Francisco and Hawaii. And then on to South America. By Mexico and the Panama Canal to Buenos Aires. And then back by Rio de

Janeiro."

"Yes—"

She looked at me, beaming.

"I've never been there," said I. "I was pretending then."

"I know," she replied.

"You knew?"

"But Robby, of course I knew. I knew at once."

"I was a bit crazy, then. Unsure and stupid and crazy. That's why I pretended."

"And now?"

"Still more now," said I. "There you see it." I pointed to the liner in the window. "It's the devil not to be able to go in it."

She smiled and put her arm in mine. *"Ach,* darling, why aren't we rich? We have such marvellous ideas of what to do with it. There are so many rich people who can do no better than go backwards and forwards to their banks and offices."

"That's why they are rich, of course," said I. "If we were rich we certainly wouldn't be so for long."

"I believe that too. We would be sure to lose it one way or another."

"And perhaps from worrying about losing it we would get nothing out of it at all. These days being rich is a profession in itself. And not such an easy one, either."

"The poor rich," said Pat. "We'd probably do better to pretend we've been it already and lost everything. You simply went bankrupt a week ago and had to sell everything —our house and my jewels and your car. What do you say to that?"

"It fits with the times, at least," I replied.

She laughed. "Then come. We two poor bankrupts will go now to our little furnished room and tell each other stories of the good old times."

"That's a fine idea."

We walked on slowly through the darkening street. More and more lights flamed up. As we reached the graveyard we saw an aeroplane, with cabins lighted, move across the green sky. It flew, solitary and beautiful, through the clear, high, lonely heavens—like some wonderful bird of desire out of an old fairy tale. We stood and watched it till it disappeared.

We had hardly been home half an hour when there was a knock on my bedroom door. I thought it must be Hasse again and went to open. But it was Frau Zalewski. She looked agitated.

"Come out quickly," she whispered.

"What's the matter?"

"Hasse."

I looked at her.

She gave a shrug. "He has shut himself in and won't answer."

"One moment."

I went back and told Pat she should rest a bit; I had to discuss something with Hasse in the meantime.

"All right, Robby. I do feel a bit tired again."

I followed Frau Zalewski down the passage. Outside Hasse's door the entire pension was already standing—Erna Bönig in her bright dragon-kimono, with red hair; the stamp-collecting accountant in smoking jacket of military cut; Orlow, pale and calm, just returned from a tea-dancing; Georg, timidly knocking and calling Hasse in a subdued voice; and lastly Frida, squinting with excitement, fear, and curiosity.

"How long have you been knocking, Georg?" I asked.

"Over a quarter of an hour," Frida, a bright crimson, immediate burst out, "and he is home, he hasn't been outside once, not since midday, only running around all the . time, everlastingly backwards and forward, and then it was quiet."

"The key's stuck on the inside," said Georg. "It's locked."

I looked at Frau Zalewski. "We must knock the key out and open. Have you a second key?"

"I'll get the bunch," announced Frida, unusually ready to assist. "Perhaps one of them will fit."

I got a piece of wire and with it turned the key into the straight and jabbed it out of the lock. It fell with a clatter to the floor on the other side. Frida screamed and put her hands over her face.

"You get out of the road, as far away as you can," said I to her, trying the keys. One of them fitted. I unlocked and opened the door.

The room lay in semi-darkness and at a first glance nothing was to be seen. The two beds gleamed grey-white, the chairs were empty, the cupboard doors shut.

"There he is!" hissed Frida, who had pushed her way forward again, over

my shoulder. Her onion breath blew hot past my cheek. "There behind, at the window."

"No," said Orlow, who had advanced swiftly a few paces into the room and come back again. He bumped into me, reached for the handle and pulled the door to. Then he turned to the others. "You had better go. It may not be good to see."

He spoke slowly, in his harsh, Russian German, and remained standing across the door.

"O God!" stammered Frau Zalewski and stepped back. Erna Bönig also stepped back a few paces. Only Frida tried to push past and get hold of the handle. Orlow pushed her away. "It really is best," said he once more.

"Sir!" snorted the accountant suddenly, drawing himself up. "What a liberty! For a foreigner!"

Orlow looked at him unmoved. "Foreigner?" said he. "Foreigner doesn't signify here. Doesn't arise—"

"Dead, eh?" hissed Frida.

"Frau Zalewski," said I, "I agree it would be best if only you and perhaps Orlow and myself stayed here."

"Telephone for a doctor, immediately," said Orlow.

Georg already had the receiver off. The whole affair had lasted only five seconds. "I'm stopping," announced the accountant, red as a beetroot. "As a German citizen I have the right—"

Orlow gave a shrug and opened the door again. Then he switched on the electric light. With a scream the two women started back. With blue-black face, black tongue between the teeth, Hasse was hanging by the window.

"Cut him down," I cried.

"No use," said Orlow slowly, harsh and sorrowful. "I know that—this face—dead, some hours already—"

"We could try at least—"

"Better not. Let the police come first."

At that moment the door bell rang. The doctor who lived near by was there. He took one glance at the thin, broken body. "Nothing to be done now," said he. "Still, we have to attempt artificial respiration. Ring the police at once and give me a knife."

Hasse had hanged himself with a thick, pink silk cord girdle. It belonged to a morning dress of his wife's, and he had fastened it very skilfully to a hook over the window. It had had soap rubbed into it. He must have stood on the

window ledge and then apparently let himself slip from there. His hands were clenched and his face looked terrible. It was odd at such a moment, but it struck me that he was wearing a different suit from this morning. It was his best, a blue worsted suit that I knew of old. He was shaved too, and had clean linen on. On the table in a pedantic order lay his pass, his bankbook, four ten-mark notes and some silver. Alongside these, two letters—one to his wife and another to the police. Next the letter to his wife lay a silver cigarette case and his wedding ring.

He must have considered it a long while and put every-'thing in order; for the room was perfectly tidy, and when we examined more closely we found on the washstand some more money and a slip of paper on which was written: "Balance of rent for this month." He had added the extra, as if he wanted to make it clear that it had nothing to do with his death.

The bell rang and two police in civilian clothes came in. The doctor who had cut down the body in the meantime, stood up. "Dead," said he; "suicide without doubt."

The officers did not reply. After shutting the door they searched the whole room. They took a few letters from a drawer in the cupboard and compared the writing with the letters on the table. The younger of the two nodded. "Anyone know the reason?"

I told what I knew. He nodded again and wrote down my address.

"Can we have him taken away?" asked the doctor.

"I've ordered an ambulance from the infirmary," replied the younger officer. "It should be here any minute."

We waited. It was quiet in the room. The doctor was kneeling on the floor beside Hasse. He had opened all his clothes and was alternately rubbing his chest with.a towel and making attempts at resuscitation. Only the whistle and gurgle of the air streaming in and out of the dead lungs was to be heard.

"The twelfth this week," said the younger officer.

"For the same reason?" I asked.

"No. Nearly all on account of unemployment. Two families, one with three children. Gas, of course. Families almost always take gas."

The bearers came with their stretcher. Frida slipped in with them. With a sort of lust she stared at Hasse's pitiful body. She had red flecks in her cheeks and was perspiring.

"What do you want here?" asked the elder officer gruffly.

She started back. "I have to make my statement," she stuttered.

"Out," snorted the officer.

The bearers laid a blanket over Hasse and took him out. Then the two officers left also. They took the papers with them. "He has left money for the burial," said the younger. "We will pass it to the proper quarter. If the wife comes, please tell her she should report to the district police station. He has left her his money. Can the rest of the things stay here for the time being?"

Frau Zalewski nodded. "The room will never let again."

"Very good."

The officers said good day, and went. We went out likewise. Orlow locked the door and gave Frau Zalewski the key. "It would be as well if as little as possible were said about the whole affair," said I.

"I think so, too," said Frau Zalewski.

"I mean you, particularly, Frida," I added.

Frida waked out of a sort of absent-mindedness. Her eyes were shining. She did not answer.

"If you say one word to Fräulein Hollmann," said I, "then God help you."

"Think I don't know that?" She spat. "The poor lady is much too ill."

Her eyes flashed. I had to control myself not to box her ears.

"Poor Hasse," said Frau Zalewski.

It was quite dark in the passage.

"You were pretty rude to Count Orlow," said I to the accountant. "Wouldn't you like to apologise to him?"

The old man stared at me. Then he exploded, "A German never apologises. Certainly not to an Asiatic," and slammed the door of his room behind him.

"What's come over our old stamp-collector?" I asked in amazement. "Why, he used to be as mild as a lamb!"

"He's been running round to every political meeting there has been, for months now," replied Georg out of the dark.

"Ach, so!"

Orlow and Erna Bönig had gone already. Frau Zalewski started to weep.

"Don't take it to heart too much," said I. "It's all past mending now."

"It is too dreadful," she sobbed. "I must move, I will never get over the sight."

"You'll get over it all right," said I. "I saw some hundreds of people like that once. Gassed Englishmen. I got over it all right."

I shook hands with Georg and went to my room. It was dark.

Involuntarily I glanced toward the window before I switched on the light. Then I listened across into Pat's room. She was asleep. I went to the cupboard, took out the bottle of cognac and poured myself a glass. It was good cognac, and it was good to have it. I put the bottle on the table. The last glass out of it Hasse had drunk. I reflected that it would have been better not to have left him by himself. I felt depressed, but I could not reproach myself. I had done so many things that I knew either everything one did was cause for reproach, or there was none at all. It had been Hasse's bad luck that it had happened to him on a Sunday. On a weekday he would have gone to the office and perhaps have gotten over it.

I drank another cognac. There was no use thinking about it. Who knows what may not be in store for himself? No man knows but that the person he is sorry for, now, may not some day be thought lucky.

I heard Pat stir, and went across. She looked up at me. "I'm past praying for, Robby," said she. "There I've been fast asleep again."

"That's good, though," I replied.

"No." She propped herself on her elbows. "I don't want to sleep so much."

"Why not? There are times when I'd like to sleep right through the next fifty years."

"But you wouldn't like being fifty years older when you waked up."

"I don't know. You could only tell that afterwards."

"Are you depressed?" she asked.

"No," said I. "The contrary. I've just decided that we are going to dress and go out and have a perfectly marvellous supper. Everything that you most like. And we'll get a bit drunk as well."

"That's fine," she replied. "But does that belong to our bankrupt state, do you think?"

"Yes," said I, "a direct consequence."

Chapter XXI

In the middle of October Jaffé sent for me. It was ten in the morning, but the weather was so dull that the light was still burning in the clinic. It mingled with the misty gloom from outside to make a pallid, sickly brightness.

Jaffé was sitting alone in his big consulting room. He raised his bald, shiny head as I entered. He pointed ill-humouredly to the big window against which the rain was beating. "What do you think of this damned weather?"

I gave a shrug. "Let's hope it will stop soon."

"That won't stop."

He looked at me and said nothing. Then he took up a pencil from the desk, contemplated it, tapped with it on the table and put it aside again.

"I can imagine why you sent for me," said I.

Jaffé muttered something.

I waited a moment. Then I said: "Pat must go away soon now, I suppose —"

"Yes."

Jaffé stared moodily ahead. "I had reckoned on the end of October. But with this weather—" He reached again for the silver pencil.

The wind flung a shower of rain rattling against the window. It sounded like distant machine-gun fire. "When do you think she should go?" I asked.

Lifting his eyes he looked at me suddenly full in the face.

"To-morrow," said he.

For a second I felt the ground go from under my feet. The air was like cotton wool and stuck in my lungs. Then it passed, and I asked as calmly as I could—but my voice came from far away as if somebody else spoke: "Has it suddenly become so much worse?"

Jaffé shook his head vigorously and stood up. "If it had changed so quickly, she wouldn't be able to travel at all," he declared unamiably. "It is better, that's all. With this weather every day is a risk. Colds and so on—"

He took some letters from his desk. "I have already made arrangements. You have only to go. I've known the doctorin charge of the sanatorium since my student days. He is very sound. I've given him all details."

He handed me the letters. I took them, but did not put them in my

pocket. He looked at me, then he passed in front of me and placed a hand on my arm. It was light as a bird's wing; I hardly felt it at all. "Difficult," said he softly, in a changed tone. "I know it. That's why I have delayed as long as I could."

"It is not difficult—" I replied.

He made a gesture. "Don't tell me—"

"No," said I, "I didn't mean that. I'd only like to know: will she come back?"

Jaffé was silent a moment. His dark, narrow eyes gleamed in the sad, yellow light. "What do you want to know that for now?" he asked after a while.

"Because otherwise it would be better she shouldn't go," said I.

He looked up at me swiftly. "What did you say?"

"Otherwise it would be better she should stay here."

He stared at me. "Do you know what that would almost certainly mean?" he then asked softly and sharply.

"Yes," said I. "It would mean that she would not die alone. And what that means I know too."

Jaffé lifted his shoulders as if his flesh crept. Then he walked slowly to the window and looked out into the rain. When he returned his face was like a mask. He stopped full in front of me. "How old are you?" he asked.

"Thirty," I replied. I did not understand what he was getting at.

"Thirty," he repeated in an emphatic tone as if he were talking to himself and had not understood me at all. "Thirty; my Godl" He walked to his desk and stood there, small and strangely absent, quite forlorn beside the enormous bare desk. "I'll be sixty soon, now," said he, without looking at me; "but I couldn't do that. I would still try everything; still try, and even though I knew perfectly well it was hopeless."

I said nothing. Jaffé stood there as if he had forgotten everything around him. Then he made a movement and his face lost the look. He smiled. "I believe definitely she will get through the winter quite well."

"Only the winter?" I asked.

"I hope, then, that in the spring she will be able to come down again."

"Hope," said I. "What does that mean?"

"Everything," replied Jaffé. "Always everything. I can't tell you more now. The rest is possibility. One must wait and see how things go up there. But I definitely hope she will be able to come back in the spring." '

"Definitely."

"Yes." He walked around the desk and with his foot kicked an open drawer shut so violently that the glasses rattled. "Damn it, man, it goes hard enough with me myself that she must go!" he muttered.

A nurse came in. Jaffé waved her away. But she stood nevertheless, dumpy, four-square, with a bulldog face under grey hair.

"Afterwards," growled. Jaffé. "Come again afterwards."

The nurse turned away irritably. As she went she switched off the electric light. Grey and milky the day suddenly stood in the room. Jaffé's face was pale all at once. "Old witch," said he. "Twenty years now I've been meaning to get rid of her. But she's too good." Then he turned to me. "Well?"

"We go to-night," said I.

"To-night?"

"Yes. If it has to be, then to-day is better than to-morrow. I'll take her. I can get away for a few days."

He nodded and shook hands.

I went. The way to the door seemed very far.

Outside I stopped and stood. I noticed I had the letters still in my hand. The rain was beating on the paper. I wiped the letters and put them in my breast pocket. Then I looked around. An omnibus pulled up just in front of the house. It was chock-full and a swarm of people crowded out. Some girls in black shining mackintoshes were laughing with the guard. He was young and the white teeth flashed in his tanned face. It can't be, thought I, that can't all be. So much life, and Pat must go!

Ringing, the bus drove off. Its wheels spurted a swathe of water over the footpath. I walked on to tell Köster and to get the tickets.

At noon I came home. I had fixed everything and already wired the sanatorium. "Pat," said I, still in the doorway, "can you have everything packed by this evening?"

"Must I go?" ,

"Yes," said I. "Yes, Pat."

"By myself?"

"No. We're going together. I'm taking you."

Her face regained colour. "When must I be ready then?" she asked.

"The train leaves to-night at ten."

"And are you going out again now?"

"No. I'm staying here till we leave."

She took a deep breath. "Then it's quite simple, Robby," said she. "Should we begin at once?"

"We've time still."

"I'd rather begin at once. Then it will be done."

"Right."

I quickly stowed in the few things I wanted to take with me and was finished in half an hour. Then I went across to Frau Zalewski and told her we were leaving in the evening. I paid her for the room up to the first of November, unless she were able to let it earlier. She wanted to start a long discussion, but I went back again quickly.

Pat was kneeling in front of her wardrobe trunk. Around it hung her dresses, on the bed lay linen, and she was now packing in her shoes. I recalled that she had knelt just so when she moved into this room and unpacked, and it seemed to me as if that was an endless long time ago, and yet only yesterday . . .

She looked up.

"Are you taking your silver dress too?" I asked.

She nodded. "What shall we do with the rest of the things, Robby? With the furniture?"

"I've already spoken to Frau Zalewski. As much as I can I'm taking into my room. The rest we'll give to a removal firm to store. Then we'll take it out again when you come back."

"When I come back," said she.

"Yes," I replied, "in the spring, when you come back all brown from the sun."

I helped her to pack, and by afternoon, when it was already turning dark outside, we had done. It was queer— the furniture was still all in the same place, only the cupboards and drawers were empty, and yet the room appeared suddenly bare and depressing.

Pat sat on her bed. She looked tired. "Should I make a light?" I asked.

She shook her head. "Leave it so awhile."

I sat beside her. "Would you like a cigarette?" I asked.

"No, Robby. Only to sit a bit like this."

I stood up and went to the window. Outside the street lamps were burning unsteadily in the rain. The trees were tossing in the wind. Below, Rosa walked slowly by. Her high boots gleamed. She had a parcel under her arm and was on her way to the International. She had her knitting with her apparently, to do some woollen things for her youngster. Fritzi and Marian followed her, both in new, white, close-fitting raincoats, and presently Mimi trailed after them, bedraggled and tired.

I turned round. It had now become so dark that I could not see Pat any more. I only heard her breathing. Slowly and dismally behind the trees of the graveyard the electric signs started to climb upward. The red lettering of the cigarette advertisement lay like some gay ceremonial decoration across the roofs of the houses, the blue and emerald circles of the wine merchants started spraying, and the bright contours of the laundry sign lit up. Their light shed a soft, confused glow through the window on to the wall and the bedcover. It wandered to and fro, and the room suddenly seemed like a lost little diving-bell on the floor of the ocean, around which the rain waves washed, and down to which penetrated, out of the far distance, a feeble glimmer of the gay world.

It was eight o'clock. Outside a klaxon sounded. "That's Gottfried with the taxi," said I. "He's come to get us for supper."

I stood up, went to the window and called down that we were coming. Then I switched on the little pocket lamp and went into my room. It was damned strange to me. I took the rum bottle and drank a quick glass. Then I sat in the armchair and stared at the carpet. After a while I stood up again and went to the washstand to brush my hair. I forgot what I was doing, for I suddenly saw my face in the glass. Cold and curious, I contemplated it. I contracted my lips and grinned at it. It grinned back, tense and pale. "You," said I, soundlessly. Then I went back to Pat.

"Shall we go, old man?" I asked.

"Yes," said she; "but I want to go into your room once more."

"Why?" I replied. "The old shack—"

"You stay here," said she. "I'll be back in a minute."

I waited for some time, then I went across. She was standing in the middle of the room and started when she caught sight of me. I had never seen her like that before. She was utterly extinguished. It was only a second; then she was smiling again.

"Come," said she. "Now let us go."

At the kitchen Frau Zalewski was awaiting us. Her grey locks were waved and she was wearing the brooch with the late Zalewski of blessed memory, on the black silk dress. "Look out," I whispered to Pat, "she'll hug you."

The next moment Pat had already disappeared into the capacious bosom. The big face above her was twitching. It was only a matter of seconds and Pat must be overwhelmed. When Frau Zalewski wept her eyes were like syphon bottles under pressure.

"Pardon me," said I, "we must go quickly. It's high time."

"High time?" Frau Zalewski surveyed me with an annihilating glance. "The train doesn't leave for two hours. In the meantime I suppose you will make the poor child drunk!"

Pat had to laugh. "No, Frau Zalewski. We only want to say good-bye to the others."

Mother Zalewski shook her head incredulously. "You see in this young man a golden bowl, Fräulein Hollmann. At the best he is a golden schnapps bottle." • "A very nice picture," said I.

"My child—" Frau Zalewski was again seized with emotion. "Come back again soon. Your room is always there for you. And if the Kaiser himself is in it, he will have to go out, when you come."

"Thank you, Frau Zalewski," said Pat. "Many thanks for everything. For the card-telling too. I will remember it all."

"That's right. And take care of yourself and get quite well again."

"Yes," said Pat. "I'll try. *Au revoir*, Frau Zalewski. *Au revoir*, Frida."

We went. The passage door banged to, behind us. On the staircase it was half-dark; some of the electric lights were burnt out. Pat was silent as she descended the stairs softly and lightly. I felt as if a leave were over and we were now going in the grey dawn to the railway station, to go to the front.

Lenz opened the door of the taxi. "Mind," said he.

The car was full of roses. Two enormous sprays of white and red roses were lying on the back seats. I recognised at once where they came from—the cathedral garden. "The last," announced Gottfried, well pleased with himself. "Cost a certain amount of trouble, too. Had to have a longish argument with a priest about it."

"Was it one with clear, blue, childlike eyes?" I asked.

"Aha, you too, brother!" replied Gottfried. "It was you he told me about then. The old boy was mighty disappointed when he realized what the doing the Stations was all about. He was beginning to think the piety of the male population was on the increase."

"Did he let you get away with the flowers then?" I asked.

"He allowed himself to be persuaded. In the end he even helped me pick them." Gottfried's nose wrinkled.

Pat laughed. "Is that true?"

Gottfried grinned. "Of course. It was marvellous to see the holy gentleman jumping in the twilight for the highest branches. He developed a real sporting spirit. Told me that he had been a good footballer at the University. Inside right, I think."

"You have led a priest to steal," said I. "That'll cost you a few hundred years' purgatory. But where's Otto?"

"He's at Alfons' already. We are having supper at Alfons', I suppose?"

"Yes, of course," said Pat.

"Right, off we go then."

Alfons was awaiting us in striped trousers, morning coat and silver-grey tie.

"Going to a wedding?" asked Lenz.

"No, but I know what is fitting," announced Alfons, kissing Pat's hand. The seams of his too-tight coat creaked, his mountain of muscles swelled so.

"Quick, have you got anything stiff to drink?" Lenz wiped his hand across his eyes as if he had seen an apparition.

Alfons straightened and majestically signalled Hans, the waiter, who brought a tray with glasses. "Say what you like, Gottfried, kümmel is the best appetizer."

"The best is a real vodka," retorted Lenz.

"Madam," Alfons turned to Pat, "we have been arguing about that ever sincje 1916. It started at Verdun, and the boy still won't hear reason. However: Welcome and good health!"

We drank.

"The kümmel is excellent," said Pat. "Like cool mountain milk."

"I'm glad you noticed that. Kümmel experts are rare." Alfons took the bottle from the counter. "Another?"

"Yes," said Pat, "one more."

Alfons filled her glass. "That's the stuff, that's the stuff." He winked benignly.

Pat emptied the glass and looked at me. I took it out of her hand and offered it to Alfons. "Give me another too."

"We'll all have one," declared Alfons. "And then the jugged hare with red cabbage and apple sauce."

"Pros't, Pat," said I. *"Pros't,* old comrade."

As a finale Alfons played the chords of the Don Cossacks on his gramophone. It was a very soft song where the choir merely hummed like a distant organ while a solitary, clear voice floated above it. To me it was as if the door opened without a sound and an old and tired man came in, sat down in silenceat one of the tables, and was listening to the song of his youth.

"Well, lads," said Alfons as the choir hummed ever softer and softer until at last it died away like a sigh, "do you know what I always think of when I hear that? Ypres, 1917, Gottfried; March, you remember, that night when Bertelsmann—"

"Yes," said Lenz, "I remember. The night when the cherry trees—"

Alfons nodded.

Köster stood up. "I think it's time." He looked at his watch. "Yes, we must be off."

"Just one cognac," said Alfons. "The real Napoleon. I brought it up specially for you."

We drank the cognac and got ready to go.

"*Au revoir,* Alfons," said Pat. "I'm so glad to have been here." She gave him her hand.

Alfons turned red. He held her hand tight between his great paws. "Well, if there's anything to be done—just say the word." He looked at her with utmost embarrassment. "You belong all right. I never would have believed a woman could belong, you know."

"Thank you," said Pat, "thank you, Alfons. You couldn't have said anything nicer to me. Au revoir and all the best."

"*Au revoir!* Soon!" Alfons blew his nose.

Köster and Lenz took us to the station. We stopped a moment at our house and I fetched the dog. Jupp had already taken the luggage.

We arrived just in time. We were hardly aboard when the train pulled out. As the engine gathered way, Lenz hauled out of his pocket a bottle, wrapped up, and held it out to me. "Here, Bob, take it. You can always do with a drop on a journey."

"Thanks," said I, "drink it yourselves to-night. I've got some."

"Take it," replied Lenz; "you can never have too much." He ran along beside the train and threw the bottle to me. *"Au revoir,* Pat!" he called. "When we go broke here, we'll all come up and join you. Otto as skier, me as dancing master, Bob as pianist. Then with you we'll form a troupe and go from hotel to hotel."

The train began to go faster and Gottfried was left behind. Pat hung out the window and waved until the station disappeared behind the curve. Then she turned round. She was very pale and her eyes were shining wet. I took her in my arms. "Come," said I, "now we'll have a drink. You've done splendidly."

"I don't feel splendid, though," she replied with an effort at a smile.

"Me neither," said I. "That's why we're going to have a drink."

I opened the bottle and gave her a little cup of cognac. "Good?" I asked.

She nodded and leaned against my shoulder. "Oh, darling, what is the good?"

"You mustn't cry," said I. "I've been so proud that you haven't cried all day."

"I'm not crying," she replied, shaking her head, and the tears ran down her thin face.

"Come, drink something," said I and held her tight. "It i is always the first moment, then it's all right again."

She nodded. "Yes, Robby. But you mustn't let it worry i you. It will be over soon; don't look, that's the best. Just let me sit by myself here a few minutes, then I'll soon get over it."

"But why not? You've been so brave all day, you can cry now as much as you like."

"I wasn't brave. You didn't notice, that was all."

"Perhaps," said I; "but that is just it."

She tried to smile. "Why is that it, Robby?"

"Because you didn't give in." I stroked her hair. "So long as a man doesn't give in, he is still more than his fate. That's an old Army rule."

"It's not courage with me, darling," she murmured. "With me it is simply fear—miserable fear of the great last fear."

"That is all there is to courage, Pat."

She leaned against me. *"Ach,* Robby, you don't know what fear is."

"I do," I replied.

The door opened. The collector asked for the tickets. I handed them to him. "Is the sleeper for the lady?" he asked.

I nodded.

"Then you must go to the sleeping car," said he to Pat. "The ticket is not good for the other compartments."

"Very well."

"And the dog must go into the luggage van," he declared. "The dog box is in the luggage van."

"Good," said I. "Where is the sleeping car, then?"

"Behind, the third car. The luggage van is away forra'd."

He left. At his breast a little lantern dangled. It looked as if he were going along the shaft of a mine.

"Then we'll pull up our. stakes, Pat," said I. "I'll smuggle Billy in to you later. There's nothing for him in the luggage Van."

I had not taken a sleeper for myself. It was nothing to me to spend the night in a corner. Besides, it was cheaper.

Jupp had already put Pat's luggage in the sleeping car. The compartment was a pleasant little room panelled with mahogany. Pat had the lower berth. I asked the attendant if the upper one was booked.

"Yes," said he, "from Frankfurt."

"What time are we in Frankfurt?" I asked.

"Half-past two."

I gave him a tip and he went back to his corner. "In half an hour I'll be back here with the dog."

"But you can't do that; the attendant stays in the car."

"Can't I? Only don't lock your door."

I went back past the attendant, who looked at me. At the next station I got out with the dog and walked along the platform past the sleeper to the next carriage. There I waited until the attendant got out to have a chat with the guard. Then I got in again, walked back along the corridor to the sleeping car, and came to Pat without being seen by anyone.

She had on a soft white cloak and looked lovely. Her eyes were shining.

"I'm quite over it now, Robby," said she.

"That's good. But won't you lie down? It's mighty narrow here. Then I'll sit beside you."

"Yes, but—" She hesitated and pointed to the upper bunk. "What if the President of the League for Fallen Girls suddenly appears in the doorway?"

"It's a long time to Frankfurt yet," said I. "I'll watch out. I won't fall asleep."

Shortly before Frankfurt I went back to my compartment. I sat in the corner by the window and tried to sleep. But at Frankfurt a chap with a walrus moustache got in, immediately unpacked a parcel, and began eating. He ate so intensively that I couldn't get to sleep. The meal lasted almost an hour. Then the walrus wiped his whiskers, stretched out, and started a concert the like of which I had never heard before. It was not a simple snore; it was a howling sigh punctuated with groans and long-drawn blubberings. I could discover no system in it, it was so varied. Fortunately about half-past five he got out.

When I waked, everywhere outside was white. It was snowing in great flakes and the compartment was bathed in a strange unearthly twilight. We were already passing through the mountains. It was almost nine o'clock. I stretched and then went to wash and shave. When I returned Pat was standing in the compartment. She looked fresh.

"Did you sleep well?" I asked.

She nodded.

"And what sort of old witch did you have in the top bunk?"

"Young and pretty. She's called Helga Guttmann, and she's going to the same sanatorium as I am."

"Really?"

"Yes, Robby. But you've slept badly, that's evident. You must have a good breakfast."

"Coffee," said I. "Coffee with a dash of cherry."

We went to the dining car. I was suddenly quite cheerful again. Things didn't seem so bad as last night.

Helga Guttmann was already there. She was a slim, lively girl of southern type. "Extraordinary," said I, "that you should meet like that, going to the same sanatorium."

"Not so extraordinary at all," she replied.

I looked at her. She laughed. "All the birds migrating gather about this time. Over there—" she pointed to the corner of the dining car—"the whole table is going too."

"How do you know that?" I asked.

"I know everyone from last time. Everybody knows everybody else up there."

The waiter came with the coffee. "And bring me a large cherry brandy as well," said I. I had to have something to drink. It was suddenly all so simple. There were people sitting there who were going to the sanatorium for the second time, even, and they seemed to make no more of it than if they were going for a walk. It was stupid to be so frightened. Pat would come back, just as all these people had come back. I didn't stay to think that all these people were now going up again—it was enough to know that you did come back and have another whole year before you. In a year a lot can happen. The past had taught us to work on short credits.

We arrived late in the afternoon. The weather had cleared, the sun shone golden on the fields of snow, and the sky was bluer than we had seen it for weeks. At the station a crowd of people were waiting. They shouted greetings and waved and the new arrivals waved back from the train. Helga Guttmann was carried off by a laughing, fair-headed woman and two fellows in bright plus-fours. She was quite excited and giddy, as if she had come home again after a long absence. *"Au revoir*, afterwards, up top," she called to us, getting into a sleigh with her friends.

The people dispersed rapidly and a few minutes later we were alone on the platform. A porter came up to us. "What hotel?" he asked.

"Sanatorium Waldfrieden," I replied.

He nodded and signalled a driver. The two stowed our luggage into a bright blue sleigh, harnessed to a pair of white horses. The horses had gay tufts of feathers on their heads and the vapour of their breath drifted round their snouts like a cloud of mother-of-pearl.

We got in. "Do you want to go to the funicular, or up by sleigh?" asked the driver.

"How far is it with the sleigh?"

"Half an hour."

"Then by sleigh."

The driver clucked with his tongue and we set off. The road led out of the village and then zigzagged upwards. The sanatorium lay on a height above

the village. It was an elongated, white structure with long series of windows. In front of each window was a balcony. On the roof a flag waved in the wind. I had expected it to be fitted up like a hospital, but on the ground floor at least it was more like a hotel. In the hall was a big open fire and a number of small tables spread with tea things.

We reported ourselves at the office. A manservant fetched in our luggage and an elderly woman explained that Pat had room Number 79. I enquired if I could also have a room, for a few days.

She shook her head. "Not in the sanatorium. But in the annex, perhaps."

"Where's the annex?"

"Right alongside."

"Good," said I; "then give me a room there and have my luggage sent over."

We travelled in a perfectly silent lift up to the second floor.

Up there it did look rather more like a hospital—a very comfortable hospital, it'is true, but nevertheless a hospital. White passages, white doors, everywhere sparkling with glass, nickel, and cleanliness. A sister in charge received us. "Fräulein Hollmann?"

"Yes," said Pat. "Room Seventy-nine, isn't it?"

The sister nodded, went ahead and opened a door. "Here is your room."

It was a bright, middle-sized room into which the evening sun was shining through a wide window. On the table was a vase of blue and red asters, and outside lay the brilliant snow fields in which the village nestled as under a great white blanket.

"Do you like it?" I asked Pat.

She looked at me a moment. "Yes," she then said.

The manservant brought the trunks. "When must I be examined?" Pat asked the sister.

"To-morrow morning. You had better go to sleep early to-night so that you'll be rested."

Pat took off her coat and laid it on the white bed, above, which a new temperature chart had been placed.

"Must I do anything now?" asked Pat.

The sister shook her head. "Not to-day. Not till after the examination to-morrow will anything be settled. The examination's at ten. I'll fetch you."

"Thank you, sister," said Pat.

The nurse went. The manservant still waited at the door. I gave him a tip

and he also went. It suddenly was very still in the room. Pat was standing at the window looking out. Her head was quite dark against the glow outside.

"Are you tired?" I asked.

She turned round. "No."

"You look it," said I.

"I'm tired another way, Robby. But I've plenty of time for that."

"Do you want to change?" I asked. "Or should we go down for an hour first? I think it would be better if we went down first."

"Yes," said she, "it would be better."

We went down again in the soundless lift and sat at one of the little tables in the hall. After a while Helga Guttmann arrived with her friends. They joined us. Helga Guttmann was excited and of a rather overheated gaiety, but I was glad she was there and that Pat already had some acquaintances. It is always hard going the first days.

Chapter XXII

A week later I returned. From the station I went straight to the workshop. It was evening when I arrived and still raining; it seemed years since I had left with Pat.

Köster and Lenz were sitting in the office. "You've come just in time," said Gottfried.

"Why, what's the matter?" I asked.

"Let the man get in the door first," said Köster.

I sat down.

"How's Pat?" asked Otto.

"All right. Right as may be. But, tell me, what's the trouble?"

It had to do with the Stutz. We had completed the repairs and delivered the car a fortnight ago. Yesterday Köster had gone to get the money. But in the meantime the fellow to whom the car belonged had gone bankrupt, and the car had been lumped in with the assets.

"It's not so bad, though," said I. "We're only concerned with the insurance."

"So we thought," said Lenz dryly. "But the car's not insured."

"Damn! Is that so, Otto?"

Köster nodded. "Only found out to-day."

"That's what we get for being Good Samaritans, to say nothing of the hiding the bus cost us," Lenz muttered. "Now to carry the baby to the tune of four thousand marks!"

"Would you believe it!" said I.

Lenz started to laugh. "It's damned funny!"

"And now, what, Otto?" I asked.

"I've lodged our claim with the receivers. But I don't expect much will come of it."

"We'll have to shut up shop, that's what," said Gottfried.

"Possible," admitted Köster.

Lenz got up. "Equanimity and a brave face in difficult circumstances are the ornament of the soldier." He went to the cupboard and fetched the cognac.

"After this spot of cognac we'll be needing an heroic face," said I. "If I'm

not mistaken it's our last good bottle."

"An heroic face, my boy," replied Lenz scornfully, "is something for difficult times. But we're living in desperate, times. The only suitable face for that is the comic." He emptied his glass. "Now I think I'll saddle Rosinante and go and round up a bit of small change."

He crossed the dark courtyard and went out with the taxi. Köster and I continued to sit.

"Stiff luck, Otto," said I. "We've had a damned lot of it lately."

"I learned in the Army not to worry more than is useful," replied Köster. "And that's plenty. What was it like up the mountains?"

"If it weren't for the illness, a paradise. Snow and sun."

He looked up. "Snow and sun? Sounds improbable, eh?"

"Yes. Damned improbable. Everything there is improbable."

"What are you doing to-night?" said he.

I shrugged my shoulders. "Taking my traps home first."

"I have to go out for an hour or so now. What about coming along to 'The Bar' afterwards?"

"Sure," said I. "What else is there?"

I collected my trunk at the railway station and took it home. I opened the door as quietly as I could, for I had no wish to talk to anyone. I managed to get in without falling into the hands of Frau Zalewski. I remained awhile sitting in my room. On the table were letters and newspapers. The letters were obviously circulars. Nobody wrote to me. But now I shall have someone, thought I.

After a time I stood up, washed and changed. I did not unpack my bag; I wanted to have something to do still when I came home alone. Nor did I go into Pat's room, though I knew nobody was in there yet. I slipped quietly down the passage and when I was outside, breathed again.

I went into the Café International to get something to eat. The waiter, Alois, greeted me at the door. "You here again?"

"Yes," said I, "one always comes back in the end."

Rosa was sitting with the other girls at a large table.They were nearly all there—it was the interval between the first and second patrols.

"Good Lord, Robert!" said Rosa. "You're a stranger."

"Don't ask questions, Rosa," said I. "The main thing is I am here again."

"How's that? Will you be coming often?"

"Probably."

"Don't take it hardly," said she, looking at me. "Everything passes."

"True," said I. "The one sure thing in the world."

"Certainly," replied Rosa. "Lill y has a song like that, too."

"Lilly?" I now saw her for the first time, sitting beside Rosa. "What are you doing here, Lilly? I thought you were married? You ought to be at home, looking after the plumbing business."

Lilly did not reply.

"Plumbing business!" said Rosa scornfully. "While she still had any money all went smooth as butter, it was Lilly here and Lilly there; the past didn't matter at all. Just six months that lasted. And when he'd got the last penny out of her, fine gentleman that he'd made of himself with her money, suddenly had no use for a common prostitute as a wife." She snorted. "Suddenly never knew anything about her past; was no end surprised to hear it. So much so that he made it a ground for divorce. But the money was gone of course."

"How much was it, then?" I asked.

"Four thousand marks, no small trifle! Think how many pig-dogs she must have had to sleep with for that!"

"Four thousand marks," said I, meditatively. "Seems to be in the air."

Rosa looked at me mystified. "What about playing us something," said she, "just to change the tune?"

"All right—as we are all here again."

I sat down to the piano and played a few songs. As I played I thought of Pat, how her money for the sanatorium would last only till the end of January, and that I would have to make more now than ever before. I strummed mechanically over the keys and on the sofa beside me saw Rosa listening enraptured, and next to her Lilly's pale face set with a terrible disillusionment, colder and more lifeless than if it had been dead.

A cry waked me from my brooding. Rosa had started from her dreams. She was on her feet behind the table, her hat had slipped to one side, her eyes were staring, and slowly, without her noticing, the coffee was pouring from

her overturned cup into her open handbag. "Arthur!" she stammered. "Arthur, is it really you?"

I stopped playing. A thin man with a shuffling gait, a bowler set well back on his head, came in. His face was a yellow unhealthy colour; he had a big nose and a little egg-shaped head.

"Arthur!" stammered Rosa again. "You?"

"Who else should it be?" growled Arthur.

"My God, where have you sprung from?"

"Where should I spring from? Out of the street through the door."

Considering that he was returning home after such a long absence, Arthur was not particularly amiable. I looked at him interestedly. So this was Rosa's idol. He looked as if he had come straight from gaol. I searched in vain for something that might have explained Rosa's infatuation. But perhaps that was the explanation. It is extraordinary what these diamond-hard judges of men do fall for.

Without so much as by your leave Arthur reached for the glass of beer that was standing on the table next to Rosa, and drank it off. The adam's apple of his thin, sinewy throat went up and down like a lift. Rosa watched him beaming.

"Will you have another?" she asked.

"Of course," growled Arthur. "But bigger."

"Alois!" Rosa waved happily to the waiter. "He wants another beer."

"So I see," replied Alois imperturbably, drawing off another glass.

"Arid our little one, Arthur, my dear, you haven't even seen little Elvira!"

"Dear!" For the first time Arthur began to show signs of interest. He raised a hand in a gesture of refusal. "Don't you blame me. That's none of my business. I told you to get rid of the brat. And you would have too, if I hadn't . . ." He sank again into gloom. "Costs a nice penny, I'll be bound, and goes on costing . . ."

"It's not so bad really, Arthur. Besides it's a girl."

"Don't they cost money?" said Arthur, putting the second glass of beer behind his collar. "You might get some cracked, rich dame to adopt it perhaps. For a consideration, of course. That's the only chance."

He roused again out of his gloom. "Got any cash?"

Rosa, eager to be of service, produced her coffee-soaked handbag. "It's only five marks, Arthur—you see, I wasn't to know you were coming—but I've got more at home."

Arthur slipped the money into his vest pocket like a pasha.

"And you won't earn anything sitting there on your behind on the sofa," he muttered ill-humouredly.

"I'm going now, Arthur. But there's nothing much about yet. Suppertime."

"Small cattle also make manure," declared Arthur.

"I'm going this minute."

"All right. . . ." Arthur tipped his bowler forward on his head. "Then I'll look in again around twelve."

He ambled off with his shuffling gait. Rosa's eyes followed him blissfully. He did not look round and left the door open behind him.

"Swine," muttered Alois shutting the door.

Rosa looked at us proudly. "Isn't he wonderful? Nothing can touch him, nothing soften him. I wonder where he's been hiding all this time?"

"You can see that from his skin," replied Wally. "In quod, of course. A prize bastard."

"You don't know him—"

"All I want."

"You don't understand." Rosa stood up. "A real man he is. None of your weeping Willy about him. . . . Well, I must be off. Cheerio, boys."

Rejuvenated, treading on air, she rocked out of the room. Once more she had someone to hand over her money to, so that he could drink it and then beat her afterwards. She was happy.

Half an hour later the others went also. Only Lilly, with her stony face, remained. I strummed on the piano a while longer, then had a sandwich and vanished likewise. You couldn't stick it for long alone there with Lilly.

I roamed through the wet, dark streets. Outside the graveyard the Salvation Army had taken up position. To the sound of drums and trumpets they were singing "Jerusalem the Golden." I stopped. Suddenly I felt I could not go on alone, without Pat. I looked at the bleak stones in the graveyard; I told myself I had been more alone a year ago—that then I did not even know Pat; that now if not actually with me, she was at least there; but it did not help—I was suddenly completely undone and at my wits' end. At last I went to my room to see if, perhaps, there was any mail from her. It was quite absurd—there could not possibly be anything yet—but I went all the same.

As I left again I met Orlow at the door. He had a dress suit on under his open coat and was going to a dance at his hotel. I asked him if he had heard anything of Frau Hasse in the meantime.

"No," said he. "She hasn't been here since. Nor to the police. It's just as well she shouldn't come back."

We walked together along the street. At the corner a lorry was standing with bags of coal. The driver lifted the bonnet up and did something to the engine. Then he got back into his seat. Just as we passed he started her up and

stepped on the gas. Orlow jumped. I looked at him. He was pale as death.

"Are you ill?" I asked.

He smiled with white lips and shook his head. "No—but it does give me a fright sometimes when I hear that noise unexpectedly. They ran the engine of a lorry outside the house so we shouldn't hear the shots, when my father was killed in Russia. We did hear them, though." He smiled again as if he had to apologise. "They made less bones about my'mother; they shot her in a cellar in the early morning. My brother and I escaped at night. We had a few diamonds. But my brother got frozen on the way."

"What were your father and mother shot for?"

"Before the war my father commanded a Cossack regiment that had put down a rising. He knew it was coming to him; found it quite in order, as you might say. Not so my mother."

"And you?"

He made a tired gesture as if to wipe out the past. "So much has happened since then."

"Yes," said I, "that's just it. More than one human brain can cope with."

We had reached the hotel where he worked. A large woman stepped out of a Buick and made for him with a happy cry.

She was rather fat and smartly dressed, with the slightly washed-out look of a blonde in the forties who had never had a care or an idea in all her life.

"Excuse me," said Orlow with a hardly perceptible glance. "Business—"

He bowed to the blonde woman and kissed her hand.

In "The Bar" were Valentin, Köster and Ferdinand Grau. Lenz came a bit later. I joined them and ordered a half-bottle of rum. I was still feeling bloody bad.

Ferdinand, broad and massive, with bloated face and perfectly clear, blue eyes, was squatting in a corner. He had had all kinds-of drink already.

"Well, Bob, my lad," said he clapping me on the shoulder, "what's happening wkh you?"

"Nothing, Ferdinand," I replied, "that's the trouble."

He looked at me awhile.

"Nothing?" said he then. "Nothing? That's a great deal. Nothing is the mirror in which you see the world."

"Bravo!" cried Lenz grinning. "Most original, Ferdinand."

"You keep quiet, Gottfried." Ferdinand turned his great head on Lenz. "A romantic like you is only a grasshopper on the verge of life. He understands it

all wrong and manufactures his sensations out of that. You lightweight, what do you know about Nothing?"

"Enough to be content to remain a lightweight," declared Lenz. "Decent people show a proper respect for Nothing. They don't go rooting about in it like moles."

Grau stared at him.

"Pros't," said Gottfried.

"Pros't," said Ferdinand. *"Pros't,* you cork."

They emptied their glasses.

"I wouldn't mind being a cork," said I, emptying my glass likewise, "the sort that does everything right and for whom everything goes right. For a bit, at any rate."

"Apostate!" Ferdinand threw himself back in his chair so that it creaked. "Do you want to be a deserter—to betray the brotherhood?"

"No," said I, "I don't want to betray anything. But I do want that not everything we touch should always go to pieces." '

Ferdinand leaned forward. His big, wild face twitched. "To compensate, you do belong to an order, brother—the order of the unsuccessful, the unsound fellows with their desires without purpose, their ambition that brings in nothing, their love without prospect, their despair without reason." He smiled. "The secret brotherhood that prefers to go under rather than make a career, that will sooner gamble, lose, trifle their life away than forget or industriously falsify the unattainable picture—the picture they carry in their hearts, brother, indelibly engraved there in the hours, the days, the nights when there was nothing but this one thing—stark living and stark dying."

He held up his glass and made a sign to Fred at the bar. "Give me something to drink."

Fred brought the bottle. "Should I put on the gramophone a bit?" he asked.

"No," said Lenz, "chuck your gramophone out the window and bring some bigger glasses. Then turn out half the lights, put a few bottles on the table and shove off into your office next door."

Fred nodded and turned out the top lights. Only the little side lamps with the parchment shades from old maps were left burning.

Lenz filled the glasses. *"Pros't,* boys! Because we're alive. Because we breathe. Because we're so conscious of life that we don't know which end to begin."

"That's just it," said Ferdinand. "Only the unhappy man appreciates happiness. The happy man is a mannequin for the life-feeling. He displays it merely; he doesn't possess it. Light doesn't shine in the light; it shines in the dark. A health to the dark. The man who has once been in the storm can't handle delicate electric apparatus any more. To hell with the storm. Blessed be our bit of life. And because we do love it we're not prepared to invest it in five per cents; we prefer to burn it. Drink, my boys. There are stars still shining that blew up ten thousand light-years ago. Drink while there is yet time. Long live unhappiness. Long live the dark."

He poured himself a tumbler of cognac and drank it up.

The rum was knocking in my head. I got up softly and went over to Fred in the office. He was asleep. I waked him and put through a long-distance call to the sanatorium.

"You may as well wait," said he. "It's pretty quick this time of night."

Five minutes later the telephone rang and the sanatorium answered.

"I want to speak to Fräulein Hollmann."

The nurse came to the phone. "Fräulein Hollmann is asleep already."

"Hasn't she a telephone in her room?"

"No."

"Can't you wake her?"

The voice hesitated. "No. Besides she is not to get up to-day."

"Has something happened?"

"No. She only has to stay in bed for the next few days."

"You're sure nothing's happened?"

"No, no, it's the usual thing at the start. She has to stay in bed and get used to the place."

I hung up the receiver. "Too late, eh?" asked Fred.

"How do you mean?" said I.

He showed me his watch. "It's getting on towards twelve."

"Yes," said I. "I shouldn't have rung up at all."

I went back and continued drinking.

At two we broke up. Lenz took Valentin and Ferdinand home in the taxi. "Come," said Köster to me, switching on Karl's engine.

"I can go those few steps, Otto," said I.

He looked at me. "We're going out a bit."

"Good." I got in.

"You drive," said Köster.

"Nonsense, Otto. I can't drive, I'm drunk."

"You drive. I'll take the responsibility."

"All right, you'll see," said I, sitting to the wheel.

The engine roared. The steering wheel shivered in my hands. The streets seesawed toward me, the houses swayed and the street lamps stood obliquely in the rain.

"It's no good, Otto. I'll hit something."

"Hit it," he replied.

I looked at him. His expression was clear, tense and alert. He was looking down the road ahead. I pressed my back against the back of the seat and gripped the wheel more firmly. I clenched my teeth and contracted my brows. Slowly the road grew more distinct.

"Where to, Otto?" asked I.

"Straight on. Out."

We reached the by-pass that led out of the city and came on to the highroad.

"Big headlight," said Köster.

The concrete road lit up light grey in front of us. It was raining only a little, but the drops struck my face like hailstones. The wind came in heavy gusts, the clouds were hanging low; just above the wood there was a cleft, and silver trickled through. The mist vanished from behind my eyes. The roar of the engine pulsed through my arms into my body. I felt the engine and its power. The explosions of the cylinders shattered the dull paralysis of my brain. The pistons hammered like pumps through my blood; I settled down. The car shot along the country road.

"Faster," said Köster.

The tyres began to whistle. Trees, telegraph poles flew humming past. A village clattered by. I was now perfectly clear-headed.

"Step on it," said Köster.

"Can I hold him still, then? The road's wet."

"You'll feel it. Come into third before the bends and accelerate round."

The engine bellowed. The air beat against my face. I crouched behind the windscreen. And suddenly I merged into the thunder of the engine, car

and body became one, one single tension, one high vibration; I felt the wheels under my feet, I felt the earth, the road, the speed—with a jolt something slipped into place, the night howled and blew; it drove everything else out of me; my lips pressed together, my hands became vises and I was now simply driving and racing, unconscious and at the same time utterly alert.

At one bend the car skidded, behind. I steered against it, once, twice, and accelerated. For an instant everything was loose like a balloon, then the car took on again.

"Good," said Köster.

"It was wet leaves," I replied and was conscious of the warmth and relief that pours over the skin after every danger.

Köster nodded. "That's the devil of forest turns in autumn. Have a cigarette?"

"Yes," said I.

We pulled up and smoked. "You can turn round now," said Köster then.

I drove back to the city and got out. "It was good that we went, Otto. I'm over it now."

"I'll show you another curve technique next time," said

he. "Throwing round with the brake. But you can only do it when the roads are drier."

"Right, Otto. Sleep well."

"Sleep well, Bob."

Karl swept off. I went into the house. I was exhausted, but quite calm and no longer depressed.

Chapter XXIII

At the beginning of November we sold the Citroën. The money sufficed to carry on the workshop for a while, but week by week our position went from bad to worse. People put up their cars for the winter to save petrol and tax, and repairs became ever less frequent. We helped ourselves out with the taxi but the takings were too slender for three, so that I was quite glad when the proprietor of the International offered to take me on again as pianist every night from December on. He had done pretty well lately; a cattlemen's club had taken one of the back rooms at the International for their weekly meeting, then the horsedealers' club followed suit, and finally the Mutual Benefit Cremation Society. In this way I was able to leave the taxi to Lenz and Köster, and it suited me quite well anyway, for without it I should often have been at a loss to get through the evenings.

Pat wrote to me regularly. I waited eagerly for her letters, but I could not picture to myself how she lived; and sometimes, in the dark, dirty December weeks when it did not get really light even at midday, I could fancy that she had long ago slipped from me and all was over. It seemed to me an endless time since she had gone away, and I could not think that she would ever come back. Then came nights filled with desperate, wild longing, when there was no help but to go and sit with the pros'titutes and cattlemen and drink till morning.

The proprietor had obtained permission to keep the International open on Christmas Eve. There was to be a grand carnival for the bachelors of the various clubs. The president of the cattlemen's club, Stefan Grigoleit, presented two suckling-pigs and a number of trotters. He had been two years a widower and had a soft heart, so he wanted to spend Christmas in company.

The proprietor erected a twelve-foot silver fir tree beside the bar; Rosa, who was an authority in all homely matters, undertook the decoration of the tree. Marian and Kiki, the pansy, who as a result of his defect had considerable feeling for the beautiful, helped her. The three started their work at noon. They used up a vast quantity of coloured balls, candles and tinsel, but there was no denying at the finish that the tree did look magnificent. As a special compliment to Grigoleit, a number of pink little marzipan pigs were

hung on it.

I had lain down on the bed in the afternoon to sleep for a few hours. When I waked it was dark. I had to think a moment—whether it was night or morning. I had been dreaming, but had forgotten what it was about. But I was still far away, and imagined I heard a black door slam behind me. Then I realized someone was knocking.

"Who's there?" I called.

"It's me, Herr Lohkamp."

I recognised Frau Zalewski's voice.

"Come in," said I, "the door's open." The latch creaked and I saw Frau Zalewski standing in the doorway against the yellow light of the passage.

"Frau Hasse's here," she whispered. "Come, quick. I can't tell her."

I did not move. I needed to find myself first. "Send her to the police," I then answered.

"Herr Lohkamp!" Frau Zalewski raised her hands.

"There's nobody else here. You must help me. After all you are a Christian."

She stood in the rectangle of the doorway like a black, dancing shadow.

"Cut it out," said I peevishly. "I'm coming."

I put on my things and went out. Frau Zalewski was waiting for me.

"Does she know anything yet?" I asked.

She shook her head and pressed her handkerchief to her lips.

"Where is she then?"

"In her old room."

Frida was standing at the kitchen door sweating with excitement. "She's got a hat on all over egrets, and a diamond brooch," she whispered.

"See to it that blathering kitchen slut doesn't listen," said I to Frau Zalewski and went in.

Frau Hasse was by the window. She swung round as I entered. She had obviously been expecting somebody else.

It was idiotic, but my first glance went to the hat and the brooch though I did not intend it. Frida was right; the hat was blatant, the brooch less so. The whole person was pretty much got-up, like that of one who would show another how well he was doing. On the whole, she didn't look so bad; better anyway than all the years she had been here.

"Hasse's at work still on Christmas Eve, I suppose, eh?" she asked sharply.

"No," said I.

"Where is he then? On holiday?"

She came up to me swaying her hips. I smelt her strong perfume. "What do you want with him then?" I asked.

"Get my things. Settle up. After all, part of it belongs to me."

"You don't have to, any more," said I. "It all belongs to you now."

She stared at me.

"He's dead," said I.

I would rather have said it differently. With more preparation, and gradually. But I didn't know how to begin. Besides my head was still muddled from the afternoon sleep—that sleep that brings a man near to suicide when he wakes.

Frau Hasse was standing in the middle of the room, and in a most extraordinary way I saw quite distinctly, the moment I told her, that if she fell over there was nothing she would hit herself against. It was curious, but I saw nothing else and thought nothing else.

She didn't fall, of course. She stood and looked at me.

"So," she said, "so—" Only the feathers of her egret hat trembled. Then suddenly, before I could realise what was happening, I saw the scented, made-up woman grow old before my eyes. It was as if time beat down on her like rain in a thunderstorm, every second a year—the strain broke, the triumph was extinguished, the face decayed. Wrinkles crept into it like worms; and then, as with a groping, uncertain movement she reached toward the back of a chair and sat down as if she were afraid of breaking something, it might have been no longer the same woman—so weary, dilapidated and old did she look.

"What did he have?" she asked without moving her lips.

"It happened suddenly," said I. "Quite suddenly."

She was not listening. She was looking at her hands.

"What shall I do?" she murmured. "Whatever shall I do now?"

I waited some time; I felt disgusting. "But surely you have somebody you can go to," said I at last. "It would be as well not to stay here. You wouldn't want to stay here anyway—"

"That's all different now, though," she replied, without looking up. "Whatever shall I do—"

"But surely you've somebody waiting for you. Go to him and talk it over

with him. Then after Christmas go to the District Police. The things are there, the bank balance as well. You have to report there to draw the money."

"Money, money," she murmured dully. "What money?"

"Quite a bit. Twelve hundred marks more or less."

She lifted her head. Her eyes suddenly had a mad lo"ok. "No," she shrieked; "it isn't true!"

I made no reply. "Say it isn't true," she whispered.

"Perhaps it isn't," said I. "On the other hand he may have been quietly keeping back the odd penny in case of need."

She stood up. She was suddenly completely changed. Her movements had something jerky and mechanical about them. She brought her face up quite close to mine.

"Yes, it is true," she hissed. "I feel it's true! The wretch! Oh, the wretch! To let me go through all that, and then it's like this. But I will take it and I'll chuck it away all in one night, chuck it out on the street I will, so that nothing is left of it. Nothing. Nothing."

I kept silent. I had done enough. She was over the start, she knew Hasse was dead, the rest she must now settle herself. She would probably be bowled over again when she heard that he had hanged himself, but that was her own affair. Hasse couldn't be brought to life again on her account.

She was crying now. Tears simply welled out of her. She cried in a high, plaintive way like a child. It lasted some time. I would have given anything to be able to smoke a cigarette. I can't bear seeing people cry.

At last she did stop. She dried her face, mechanically took out her powder box and powdered herself without looking in the glass. Then she put the box away again but forgot to close her handbag. "I don't know anything any more," said she in a broken voice. "I don't know anything. He was probably a good husband."

"He was that."

I gave her the address of the District Police and told her it would be closed to-day. I thought it better she should not go there at once. She had had enough for to-day.

When she had gone Frau Zalewski came out of her sitting room. "Is there no one here but me, then?" I asked, furious with myself.

"Only Herr Georg. What did she say?"

"Nothing."

"So much the better."

"All depends. Sometimes it isn't better."

"I've no pity for her," declared Frau Zalewski energetically. "Not the least."

"Pity is the most useless article in the world," said I irritably. "It's the reverse side of gloating, you ought to know that. What's the time now?"

"Quarter to seven."

"I want to telephone Fräulein Hollmann at seven o'clock. But so that nobody hears. Is that possible?"

"There's nobody in, except Herr Georg. I've sent Frida off already. If you like you could sit in the kitchen. The cord reaches just that far."

"Good."

I knocked on Georg's door. It was a long time since I had been to see him. He was sitting at his desk and looked damned bad. About him lay a pile of torn-up paper.

"Day, Georg," said I, "what are you doing?"

"Stocktaking," he replied with a faint smile. "Good occupation for Christmas."

I stooped to look at one of the bits of paper. It was a college notebook with chemical formulae.

"Why this?" I asked.

"There's no object any more, Bob."

He looked pretty transparent. His ears were like wax. "What have "you had to eat to-day?" I asked.

"What does it matter? It's not that, anyway. Not food. But I simply can't go on any more. I must give up."

"Is that very bad?"

"Yes," said he.

"Georg," I replied calmly, "look at me now. Do you suppose I didn't once want to be something more than pianist in a whore shop, in the Café International?"

He kneaded his hands about. "I know, Bob. But that doesn't help me. For me it was everything. And now I see there's no object in it. There's no object in anything. What do we live for, I'd like to know."

I could not help laughing, he sat there so miserable and took it all in such grim earnest. "You silly ass," said I. "Why, now you've found out something.

Do you suppose you're alone in your wonderful wisdom? Of course there's no object. One doesn't live for a purpose, anyway. It's not so simple as that these days. Come, you get dressed. You're coming along to the International with me. We're going to celebrate your coming of age. You've been a schoolboy up to now. I'm collecting you in half an hour."

"No," said he. He was damned far gone.

"Oh, yes you are," said I. "You're going to do me the favour. I don't want to be by myself to-night."

He looked at me doubtfully. "If you like," he replied then despondently. "After all what does it matter."

"There, you see," said I, "already that's quite a good election slogan for a beginner."

At seven o'clock I put through the call to Pat. After seven the fee was half, so I could talk twice as long. I sat on the table in the hall and waited. I didn't want to go into the kitchen. It smelt too much there of haricot beans, and I didn't want to associate Pat with that.

A quarter of an hour later the call came through. Pat was at the instrument immediately. As I heard her warm, deep, slightly hesitant voice so close beside me, I became so excited I could hardly speak. It was a sort of tremour, a boiling of the blood, against which no effort of the will availed anything. . . .

"My God, Pat," said I, "are you really there?"

She laughed. "Where are you then, Robby? At the office?"

"No, I'm sitting on the table at Frau Zalewski's. How are you?"

"Well, darling."

"Are you up?"

"Yes. I'm sitting on the window seat in my room and have my white bathing dress on. It's snowing outside."

I suddenly saw her clearly before me. I saw the snowflakes whirling, I saw the fine, dark head, the straight shoulders, inclined slightly forward, the bronzed skin.

"My word, Pat," said I, "this damned money. If it weren't for that I'd be sitting in an aeroplane now and arrive there before the night's out."

"Ach, darling—"

She was silent. I listened in to the light scratching and humming of the

wire. "Are you there still, Pat?"

"Yes, Robby. But you mustn't say things like that. It made me quite giddy."

"I feel damned giddy, too," said I. "Tell me everything you do up there."

She began to speak, but soon I no longer heard what she was saying. I heard only her voice, and as I sat there on the table in the dark hall, between the boar's head and the kitchen with the haricot beans, a door seemed to open and a wave of warmth and light came in, soothing and bright, full of dreams and desire and youth. I propped my feet against the table, I rested my head in my hand, I looked at the boar's head and the repulsive kitchen door, but I could not help myself—summer was all at once there; wind, sunset over the fields of corn, and the green light of the woodland path.

The voice ceased. I breathed deep. "It is lovely to talk to you, Pat. And to-night what are you doing there?"

"To-night there's a little party. It starts at eight o'clock. I'm just getting dressed for it."

"What are you going to wear? The silver dress?"

"Yes, Robby. The silver dress you carried me along the passage in."

"And whom are you going with?"

"Nobody. It's here in the sanatorium. Below in the hall. We all know each other, you see."

"It must be difficult for you in the silver dress not to be false to me."

She laughed. "Not in that at all. I have memories there."

"So have I. I've seen its effect. But I'm not asking for details, that's all. You can be false if you like, I only want not to know it. Afterwards, when you come back, it will only be like a dream to you and past and forgotten."

"Ach, Robby," said she slowly and her voice sounded deeper than before, "I can't be false to you. I think too much of you for that. You don't know what it is like being up here. A beautiful sunshiny imprisonment. One amuses oneself as well as one can, that's all. When I think of your room, sometimes I don't know what to do; then I go to the station and watch the trains come up from below, and think I am nearer to you if I get into a compartment, or pretend I have come to meet someone."

I bit my lip. I had never heard her talk like that before. She had always been shy, and couched her liking in a gesture, a glance, rather than in words.

"I'll see to it that I come and visit you sometime, Pat," said I.

"Really, Robby?"

"Yes, at the end of January, perhaps."

I knew it was hardly likely, for from February on we would have to rake up the money for the sanatorium. But I said it, so that she should have something she could think about. Then later it wouldn't be so difficult to postpone it until the day came when she would return.

"Good-bye, Pat," said I. "Look after yourself. Be happy, then I shall be happy too. Be happy to-night."

"Yes, Robby, I am happy, now."

I collected Georg and went with him to the Café" International. The smoky old shack was hardly recognisable. The Christmas tree was burning and its warm light reflected in all the bottles and glasses and in the nickel and copper of the bar. The pros'titutes in evening dresses decked with false jewellery were seated expectantly around the table.

Sharply at eight o'clock the glee-party of the cattlemen's club marched in. They formed up by the door, according to parts, first tenor on the right down to second bass away on the left. Stefan Grigoleit, widower and pig dealer, produced a tuning fork, gave out the notes and then they started in four voices:

O Holy Night, fill thou our hearts with heavenly peace, Give the poor pilgrim rest; pour balm upon his hurt, The stars are shining brightly, bright in the blue sky, Seeking to lead me back to thee—heavenward, home.

"So moving," said Rosa wiping her eyes.

The second verse died away. Thunderous applause resounded. The glee-party bowed its thanks. Stefan Grfgbleit mopped the perspiration from his forehead. "Beethoven is still Beethoven," he declared. No one contradicted. Stefan stowed away his sweat rag. "And now to arms."

The dinner table was in the big clubroom. In the centre on silver dishes over little spirit lamps, crisp and brown, reigned the twin suckling-pigs. They had lemons in their snouts, blazing fir trees on their backs and were surprised at nothing any more.

Alois turned out in newly dyed tails, a gift from the proprietor. He brought half a dozen pitchers of Steinhager and filled the glasses. With him came Potter of the Cremation Society, who had just been attending a funeral. "Peace on earth," said he magnificently, shaking hands with Rosa and taking a place beside her.

Stefen Grigoleit, who at once invited Georg to join them at the table, stood up and delivered the briefest and best speech of his life. He raised his glass of sparkling gin, looked around beaming, and cried "*pros't!*" Then he sat down again and Alois brought in the trotters, sauerkraut and chipped potatoes. The host arrived with big tall glasses of Pilsener beer.

"Eat slowly, Georg," said I. "Your stomach has to accustom itself to the fatty meat first."

"I have to accustom myself altogether first," he replied and looked at me.

"That won't take long," said I. "No comparisons, that's all. Then it goes all right."

He nodded and bent again over his plate.

Suddenly there arose a quarrel at the far end of the table. Potter's crowing voice was audible above the din. He had been trying to get one of the guests, Busch, a cigar merchant, to drink with him, but Busch had refused on the ground that he didn't want to drink, so as to be able to eat more.

"That's damned nonsense," snapped Potter. "To eat you have to drink. If you drink you can even eat more."

"Rot," boomed Busch, a gaunt, tall fellow with a flat nose and horn-rimmed spectacles.

Potter leapt up. " 'Rot?' You say that to me, you tobacco owl?"

"Peace," called Stefan Grigoleit. "No rows on Christmas Eve."

He had them explain what the trouble was and delivered a Solomon's judgment. The matter should be tried out. In front of each of the disputants were placed several plates of equal size with meat, potatoes and sauerkraut. They were enormous portions. Potter was allowed to drink whatever, he liked, Busch was to stay dry. To add spice to the whole, bets were laid on the two rivals. Grigoleit conducted the totalisator.

Potter built up a garland of beer glasses around him, and in between little glasses, like diamonds, of Steinhager. The betting was three to one in his favour. Then Grigoleit signalled the start.

Busch ate away doggedly, bent low over his plate. Potter fought in an open, upright posture. With every swig he took he gave Busch an exulting *pros't*, to which the latter replied with a spiteful look.

"I feel bad," said Georg to me.

"Come out with me." I took him to the lavatory and then sat down in the outer room to wait for him. The sweet smell of the candles mingled with the crackle and the smell of burning pine needles. And suddenly it was as if I

heard the light, loved footstep, felt the warm breath, and saw before me two eyes . . .

"Damn," said I and stood up. "What's the matter with me?"

At the same moment I heard a mighty roar. "Potter! Bravo Aloysius!"

Cremation had won.

In the back room cigars were smoking and the cognac was passed around. I continued to sit by the bar. The girls came in whispering eagerly.

"What are you up to?" I asked.

"We get our presents now," replied Marian.

"Ach, so." I leaned my head against the bar and tried to think what Pat would be doing now. I pictured the hall of the sanatorium, the open fire and Pat at a table by the window with Helga Guttmann and some other people I didn't know. It was all so dreadfully far away. . . . Sometimes I used to think that one day I should wake up, and all that had been would be over, forgotten, sunk, drowned. Nothing was sure—not even memory.

A bell rang. The girls ran across to the billiard room like a flock of hens at feeding-time. There stood Rosa with the bell. She beckoned me to come too.

On the billiard table under a little Christmas tree stood an array of plates covered with tissue paper. On each lay a slip of paper with the name, and under it the parcels with the presents that the girls were giving one another. Rosa had arranged it all. Each girl had had to give her presents for the others, wrapped up, to Rosa, and she had distributed them over the several plates.

The girls in their excitement tumbled over one another, like children in their haste to see as quickly as possible what they had got.

"Won't you look at your plate?" asked Rosa.

"What plate?" :

"Yours. There are presents for you too."

Sure enough, there stood my name in two colours, red and black, and capitals even. Apples, nuts, oranges—a pullover from Rosa, knitted herself, a grey-green tie from the hostess, a pair of real artificial silk pink socks from Kiki, a leather belt from Wally the beautiful, a half-bottle of rum from Alois the waiter, half a dozen handkerchiefs from Marian, Lina, and Mimi together, and from the host two bottles of cognac.

"Boys," said I, "boys, but this is most unexpected."

"A surprise, eh?" cried Rosa.

"Absolutely."

I stood there confounded, and, damn it, was touched to the marrow.

"Lads," said I, "do you know when I last got a Christmas present? I don't even remember. It must have been before the war. But now I have nothing at all for you!"

There was an immense outburst of delight that I had been so completely outwitted.

"Because you've always played something for us," said Lina, blushing.

"Yes, play something for us, that's your present," declared Rosa.

"Anything you like," said I. "Everything you like."

"Something out of childhood," called Marian.

"No, something cheerful," opposed Kiki.

He was overruled. He never quite counted as a man in any case. I sat down to the piano and began. They all sang with me.

Out of my childhood—comes a song to me . . .
Oh, how far off now lies—the land that once was mine . . .

The hostess turned out all the electric lights. Only the soft light of the candles remained. The beer tap trickled gently like some spring in the woods and the flat-footed Alois hovered in the background to and fro like a dark Pan. I started the second verse. With shining eyes and good little middle-class faces the girls stood around the piano—but look, who is that snivelling tears? Kiki, Kiki from Luckenwalde.

Softly the door opened from the big clubroom. Humming melodiously, the glee-party goose-stepped in and took up position behind the girls, Grigoleit leading with a black Brazilian cigar.

When first I said farewell—the world seemed full to me,
When I came back again—it all was gone . . .

Softly the mixed chorus died away. "Beautiful," said Lina.

Rosa lit the magic candles. They hissed and sprayed.

"So, and now for something jolly," she called. "We must cheer Kiki up."

"Me too," said Stefan Grigoleit.

At eleven Köster and Lenz arrived. With Georg, still pale, we sat at a table by the bar. To steady him up, Georg was given a couple of slices of dry bread to eat. Soon after Lenz was lost to view in the tumult of the cattlemen. A quarter of an hour later he turned up at the bar with Grigoleit. The two had linked arms and were pledging eternal brotherhood.

"Stefan," said Grigoleit.

"Gottfried," replied Lenz and both tipped the cognac down.

"I'll send you a parcel of blood and liver sausage to-morrow, Gottfried. Suit you?"

"Down to the ground." Lenz clapped him on the shoulder. "Good old Stefan!"

Stefan beamed. "You have a grand laugh," said he, "I like people who can laugh well. I get so easily depressed myself, that's my weakness."

"Mine too," said Lenz, "that's why I laugh, of course. Come, Bob, have one with us to endless world laughter."

I went across to them. "What's up with the lad there?" asked Stefan, pointing to Georg. "He looks mighty depressed too."

"It wouldn't take much to make him happy, though," said I. "All he wants is a bit of work."

"Not so easy," replied Stefan, "nowadays."

"He'll do anything."

"Everybody will do anything nowadays." Stefan grew soberer.

"He only needs seventy-five marks a month."

"Impossible. He couldn't live on that."

"He does live on it," said Lenz.

"Gottfried," replied Grigoleit, "I'm an old toper. Good. But work's a serious matter. It's not a thing you give to-day and take away to-morrow. That's worse than letting a man marry and taking his wife away again in the morning. But if the lad's honest and can live on seventy-five marks he's had a hell of a time. He can report to me at eight o'clock Tuesday. I need an assistant with my running-about for the club and so on. Now and then there's a parcel of meat thrown in. Looks as if he ought to have something between his ribs."

"Is that honour bright?"

"It's the honour bright of Stefan Grigoleit."

"Georg," I called. "Here a minute."

He started to shake when he heard it. I went back to Köster.

"Listen, Otto," said I, "if you could live your life over again, would you like to?"

"Just as it was?"

"Yes."

"No."

"Me neither," said I.

Chapter XXIV

It was a cold night in January, three weeks later, and I was sitting in the International playing vingt-et-un with the proprietor. The place was deserted, not even the pros'titutes had come. There was unrest in the city. Every few minutes columns marched past outside, some with crashing military marches, others to the tune of the Internationale, and then again silent, long processions with placards carried in advance demanding work and bread. The beat of the many footsteps on the pavement was like the inexorable ticking of some gigantic clock. During the afternoon there had already been a clash between strikers and the police; twelve people had been hurt, and for hours the entire force had been standing to. The whistle of motor ambulances shrilled through the streets.

"There's no rest," said the proprietor, showing a sixteen. "Ever since the war there's been no rest. And yet we all wanted nothing else then, but rest. Crazy world."

I showed seventeen and raked in the pot.

"It's not the world that's crazy," said I. "It's the people in it."

Alois, who was standing behind the proprietor, rocking backwards and forwards on his toes, interjected: "They aren't crazy, merely covetous. One grudges the other. And because there's too much of everything, most have nothing at all. It's only a matter of distribution."

"True," said I and passed with two cards. "But that's been the trouble for a few thousand years."

The proprietor laid down his cards. He had fifteen and eyed me doubtfully. Then he bought one, an ace, and was cooked. I showed my cards. They were only twelve pips and he might have won already with his fifteen.

"Damn, I'm stopping now," he cursed, "that was a low-down bluff. I thought you had eighteen at least."

Alois chuckled. "That's the way they play in the infantry."

I raked in the money. The proprietor yawned and looked at his watch. 'Nearly eleven. I think we'll shut down. Nobody else is coming."

"Here comes someone now," said Alois.

The door opened. It was Köster. "Anything fresh outside, Otto?"

He nodded. "A hall fight at the Borussia rooms. Two badly hurt, a few dozen slightly injured and about a hundred arrests. Two shootings in the north. One bobby dead. Don't know how many hurt. But the fun will probably only start when the mass meetings finish. Are you through here?"

"Yes," said I. "We were just about to close down."

"Then come along."

I looked across at the proprietor. He nodded. "So long, then," said I.

"So long," replied the proprietor indolently. "Look after yourselves."

We went. Outside it smelt like snow. Broadsheets were lying on the street like big, white, dead butterflies.

"Gottfried's missing," said Köster. "He's in one of these mass meetings. I hear they're going to be broken up, and imagine anything might happen. It would be good if we could nab him before the finish. He's not exactly the coolest of people."

"Do you know where he is then?" I asked.

"Not exactly. But almost certainly at one of the three main meetings. We must do the round. Gottfried's pretty easy to spot with his yellow top."

"Good." We got in and set off with the car for the first meeting place.

On the street was a lorry with police. The straps of their helmets were lowered. Carbine barrels glimmered dully in the lamplight. Coloured banners were hanging from the windows. Crowded in the entrance were a number of people in uniform. Nearly all were very young.

We bought two tickets, declined pamphlets, collecting boxes and membership cards, and went into the hall. It was crowded and well lighted in order that interrupters could be spotted immediately. We stayed near the entrance and Köster ran his keen eyes over the rows.

On the platform was a powerful, stocky fellow, talking. He had a full chesty voice that could be understood without difficulty in the remotest corner. It was a voice that carried conviction without one's heeding, much what it. said. And what it did say was easy to understand. The man walked about the stage, casually, with little movements of his arms, off and on drank a mouthful of water and cracked a joke. But then suddenly he stood still, turned full on the audience, and in a changed, shrill voice, whipped out sentence after sentence, truths that everybody knew of misery, starvation, unemployment, climbing all the time higher and higher, sweeping his hearers

along with him till in a furioso he smashed out, "This cannot go on I This must be changed!"

The audience roared applause, it clapped and yelled, as if that had already changed everything. The man above waited. His face shone. And then it came—broad, persuasive, irresistible—promise after promise; it simply rained promises; a paradise was built up over the assembled heads; domes majestically coloured—it was a lottery where every loser was a winner, and in which every man found his private happiness, his private right and his private revenge.

I looked at the audience. They were people of every calling—clerks, little business people, civil servants, a sprinkling of workers and lots of women. They sat there in the hot hall, leaning back or looking forward, row upon row, cheek by jowl, the torrent of words pouring over them, and it was curious—different as they all were, the faces had all the same absent expression, a sleepy yearning look into the remoteness of some misty Fata Morgana; there was vacancy in it, and at the same time a supreme expectancy that obliterated everything—criticism, doubt, contradictions and questions, the obvious, the present, reality. He, up there, knew everything—had an answer for every question, a help for every need. It was good to trust oneself to him. It was good to have someone to think for one. It was good to believe.

Köster gave me a prod. Lenz wasn't there. He signed with his head toward the exit. I nodded and we went. The ushers followed us with suspicious, evil looks. In the anteroom was a band ready to march into the hall, behind them a forest of banners and symbols.

"Well done, eh?" asked Köster when we were outside.

"First rate. As an old propaganda merchant I'm a judge of that."

We drove on a few streets farther. Here was the'second political meeting. Other banners, other uniforms, another hall; but for the rest identical. On the faces the same expression of undefined hope and credulous vacancy. The white-covered committee table faced the rows of chairs; at it the party secretaries, the committee, a few zealous old spinsters. The speaker, an official type, was feebler than the last. He talked paper German, adduced statistics, proofs; all that he said was true, but for all that he was not so convincing as the other, who proved nothing but merely made statements. Wearily the party secretaries at the committee table gazed sleepily ahead; they had hundreds of such meetings behind them.

"Come on," said Köster after a while. "He's not here either. I hardly

expected it anyway."

We drove on. The air was cold and fresh after the used-up atmosphere of the over-full halls. The car shot through the streets. We came along by the canal. The street lamps cast only oily yellow reflections on the dark water that lapped softly on the concrete bank. A barge moved, black and slow, across. The tug had red and green signal lights out. A dog barked, then a man passed in front of the light and disappeared into a hatchway which shone out golden for an instant. On the far side of the canal the houses of the West End lay brilliantly lighted. The arch of a bridge swung from them to the other side. Unceasingly cars, buses and electric trains passed back and forth across it. It looked like a shining, coloured snake over the sluggish black water.

"I think we'll leave the car here and go the last bit on foot," said Köster after a while. "It will be less conspicuous."

We halted Karl under a lamp outside a pub. A white cat moved silently off as we got out. A bit farther along some pros'titutes with aprons were standing in an archway and ceased talking as we passed. Against a house corner an organ-grinder was leaning asleep. An old woman was rummaging in the garbage on the edge of the street.

We came to a gigantic, grimy apartment house with numerous blocks behind and courtyards and passages. On the lower floor were shops, a bakery, and a receiving depot for old clothes and iron. On the street in front of the first passage were two lorries with police.

In a corner of the first courtyard was a stand built of planks of wood, and from it hung several large star charts. In front of a table with papers stood a chap in a turban on a little platform. Above his head there hung a signboard:

Astrology, Palmistry, Fortunetelling—Your Horoscope for 50 Pfennigs. A swarm of people surrounded him. The harsh light of the carbide lamp fell on his yellow, wrinkled face. He was addressing the spectators, who were looking up at him in silence—with the same lost, absent, miracle-desiring look as, a while ago, that of the audiences of the various mass-meetings with their banners and bands.

"Otto," said I to Köster, who was walking in front of me, "I know now what those people are wanting. They don't want politics at all. They want substitute religion."

He looked around. "Of course. They want to believe in something again—in what, it doesn't matter. That's why they are so fanatical, too, of course."

We entered the second courtyard, near the place of the third meeting. All

windows were lighted. Suddenly we heard a row from inside. The same moment, as at an agreed signal, several young people in wind-jackets dashed out of a dark side-entrance, across the yard, along close under the windows, to the door of the meeting place. The foremost tore it open and they charged in.

"A stormtroop," said Köster. "Come here against the wall behind the beer barrels."

A raging and yelling began in the hall. The next second a window splintered and someone came flying through. Immediately the door burst open, a heap of human beings came hurtling out, those in front stumbled and the rest fell over them. A woman screamed, yelling for help, and ran out through the archway. A second thrust followed, with chair legs and beer glasses, an inextricable fury. One gigantic carpenter sprang out, took up a position more or less on the outskirts; whenever he saw in front of him the head of an opponent, his long arm would swing and knock him back into the melee. He did it perfectly calmly, as if he were chopping wood.

A fresh scrum burst out and suddenly, not three yards in front of us, we saw Gottfried's yellow thatch in the hands of an old regular.

Köster took one dive and disappeared into the heap. A few seconds later the regular let Gottfried go, and with an air of utter astonishment flung up his arm and like an uprooted tree fell back into the crowd. Immediately after I discovered KSster dragging Lenz behind him by the collar.

Lenz was resisting. "Let me go, Otto, just a moment," he choked.

"Nonsense," called Köster, "the cops'll be here in a minute. Quick, out, at the back there."

We ran across the courtyard to the dark side-entrance. It was not a moment too soon. Immediately a sudden whistle shrilled through the yard, the black helmets of the police flashed up, a cordon was thrown round the courtyard. We ran up the staircase in order not to be caught by the patrol. From a landing window we watched how it went below. The police worked superbly. They cut off the retreat, drove a wedge into the scrum, tore the heaps asunder, arrested and immediately began transporting them—first the indignant carpenter, who tried in vain to explain something.

Behind us a door clicked. A woman in a nightshirt, with white, thin legs, a candle in her hand, poked her head out. "Is that you?" she asked ill-humouredly.

"No," said Lenz, who had recovered himself. The woman banged the door to. Lenz examined the door with his pocket torch. It was Gerhard

Peschke, head bricklayer who was being waited for here.

Below it became quiet. The police retired and the courtyard emptied. We waited a while longer, then went down the stairs again. Behind one door a child was crying, crying softly and plaintively in the dark. "He's right too," said Gottfried. "He's crying beforehand."

We walked through the outer courtyard. The astrologer was standing deserted before his star charts. "A horoscope, gentlemen?" he called. "Or the future from the hand?"

"Fire away," said Gottfried, offering him his hand.

The fellow studied it. "You have a weak heart," said he then, categorically. "Your emotions are well developed, your headline very short; to make up for it you are gifted musically. You dream a lot, but you will be no good as a husband. Still I see here three children. You. have a diplomatic disposition, are inclined to be taciturn, and will live to be eighty."

"That's right," declared Gottfried. "Just what my mother used to tell me before she was married—the bad live to be old. Mortality is man's invention; not in the logic of life."

He gave the chap his money and we went on. The street was empty. A black cat darted away in front of us. Lenz pointed to it. "We ought to turn back now, really."

"Don't worry," said I, "we saw a white one a while ago; that cancels out."

We walked along the street. Some people were approaching on the other side. They were four young lads. One was wearing bright yellow, new leather-leggings, the others sort of military boots. They halted and looked across at us. "There he is!" suddenly called the one with the leggings, running across the street toward us. The next moment there were two shots, the young fellow sprang away and all four made off as fast as they could. I saw Köster about to set off in pursuit, but then with an extraordinary twist he swung back, stretched out his arms, uttered a stifled, wild cry and tried to catch Gottfried Lenz, who crashed heavily to the pavement.

For one second I thought he had merely fallen; then I saw the blood. Köster ripped his coat open, tore away the shirt—the blood welled out thickly. I pressed my handkerchief against it.

"Stay here, I'll get the car," called Köster and ran off.

"Gottfried," said I, "can you hear me?"

His face turned grey. His eyes were half-shut. The lids did not move. With one hand I supported his head, with the other I pressed my handkerchief

on the bleeding place. I knelt beside him, I listened for his gurgling, his breathing, but there was nothing, no sound anywhere—the endless street, endless houses, endless night—I heard only the light dripping of the blood on the pavement and knew that that must have been another time and that it could not be true.

Köster raced up. He pulled away the back rest of the left-hand seat. Carefully we lifted Gottfried up and laid him on the two seats. I jumped into the car and Köster shot off. We drove to the nearest casualty station. Köster braked cautiously.

"See if there's a doctor there. Else we must go on."

I ran in. An orderly came towards me. "Is there a doctor?"

"Yes. Have you got someone?"

"Yes. Come with me. A stretcher."

We lifted Gottfried on to the stretcher and carried him in. The doctor was already standing in his shirt-sleeves. "Over here."

He pointed to a flat table. We lifted Gottfried off the stretcher. The doctor pulled down a light close over the body. "What is it?"

"Revolver shot."

He took a swab of cotton wool, wiped away the blood, felt Gottfried's pulse, listened to him and straightened up. "Nothing to be done."

Köster stared at him. "But the shot is well to the side. It can't be so bad."

"There are two shots," said the doctor.

He wiped the blood away again. We bent forward. Then we saw that obliquely under the heavily bleeding wound there was a second—a little black holein the region of the heart.

"He must have died instantly," said the doctor.

Köster straightened up. He looked at Gottfried. The doctor plugged the wounds and stuck strips of sticking plaster across.

"Would you like a wash?" he asked.

"No," said I.

Gottfried's face was now yellow and fallen in. The mouth was drawn a little awry, the eyes were half-closed, one a bit more than the other. He looked at us. He kept on looking at us.

"How did it happen?" asked the doctor.

No one answered. Gottfried looked at us. He looked at us. fixedly.

"He can stay here," said the doctor.

Köster moved. "No," he replied. "We're taking him with us." .

"Can't be done," said the doctor. "We must telephone the police. The criminal police as well. Everything must be done immediately to find the culprit."

"Culprit?" Köster looked at the doctor as if he did not understand him. "Good," said he then, "I'll drive along and fetch the police."

"You can telephone. They'll be here quicker then."

Köster slowly shook his head. "No. I'll fetch them."

He went out and I heard Karl leap away. The doctor pushed a chair toward me. "Won't you sit down in the meantime?"

"Thanks," said I and continued to stand. The bright light still lay on Gottfried's bloody chest.

The doctor pushed the lamp a bit higher. "How did it happen?" he asked once more.

"I don't know. Must have been a mistake for somebody else."

"Was he in the war?" asked the doctor.

I nodded.

"You can see that by the scars," said he. "And the withered arm. He's been wounded several times."

"Yes. Four times."

"A skunk's trick," said the stretcher-bearer. "And all young bastards who were still in their cradles then."

I made no reply. Gottfired looked at me steadily.

It was a long time before Köster returned. He was alone. The doctor put aside the newspaper in which he had been reading. "Are the officers there?" he asked.

Köster stood still. He had not heard what the doctor said.

"Are the police there?" asked the doctor once again.

"Yes," replied Köster. "The police. We must telephone them to come."

The doctor looked at him, but said nothing and went to the telephone.

A few minutes later two officers arrived. They sat at a table and took down Gottfried's personal description. I don't know, but somehow it seemed to me silly to state what his name was, and when he was born and where he lived, now, when he was dead. I stared at the black stump of pencil which the officer moistened from time to time with his lips, and replied mechanically.

The other officer began to prepare a statement, Köster gave the necessary

information. "Can you say roughly what the culprit looked like?" asked the officer.

"No," replied Köster. "I didn't notice."

I looked across at him. I thought of the yellow leggings and the uniforms.

"You don't know to which political party he belonged? You didn't see the badges or the uniform?"

"No," said Köster. "I didnt see anything before the shots. And then I only thought—" he balked an instant— "of my comrade."

"You belong to a political party?"

"No."

"I mean, because you said he was your comrade—"

"He is my comrade from the war," replied Köster.

The officer turned to me: "Can you describe the culprit?"

Köster looked at me hard.

"No," said I. "I saw nothing either."

"Extraordinary," said the officer.

"We were talking at the time, and not noticing anything. Then it all happened very quick."

The officer sighed. "Then there's not much chance of catching the blighter." He finished the statement.

"Can we take him with us?" asked Köster.

"Actually—" The officer looked at the doctor. "The cause of death is established beyond all doubt?"

The doctor nodded. "I've already written the certificate."

"And where is the bullet? I must take the bullet."

"The bullets are still in. I should have—" The doctor hesitated.

"I must have them both," said the officer. "I must see if they are both from the same weapon."

"Yes," replied Köster, at a look from the doctor.

The orderly pulled the stretcher into position and pulled down the light. The doctor took his instruments and with a probe explored the wounds. The first ball he found quickly; it was not very deep. For the other he had to cut. He pulled his rubber gloves right up and reached for the forceps and the knife. Köster stepped up quickly to the table and closed Gottfried's eyes that still stood half-open. I turned away as I heard the light hiss of the knife. For an instant I wanted to jump in and thrust the doctor aside, for it suddenly came

over me that Gottfried was merely unconscious and that the doctor was now really killing him—but then I knew again. We had seen enough dead men to know.

"There she is," said the doctor and straightened up. He wiped the bullet and gave it to the officer.

"It is the same. From the same weapon, isn't it?"

Köster bent down and looked closely at the little, dull shining bullets that rolled to and fro in the officer's hand.

"Yes," said he.

The officer wrapped them in paper and put them in his pocket.

"It is not allowed really," said he, then, "but if you want to take him home . . . The facts are clear, aren't they, doctor?" The doctor nodded. "You are coroner's doctor as well, of course," went on the officer; "in that case—if you like—only you must . . . It may be that a commission will come to-morrow—"

"I understand," said Köster. "We will leave everything just as it is."

The officers went.

The doctor had covered and stuck down Gottfried's wounds again. "How will you do it?" he asked. "You can take the stretcher. You only need send it back sometime during the day to-morrow."

"Yes, thank you," said Köster. "Come on, Bob."

"I'll help you," said the orderly.

I shook my head. "We can manage."

We took up the stretcher, carried it out and laid it on the two left-hand seats, which with the lowered backs made a flat place. The orderly and the doctor came out and watched us. We put Gottfried's coat over him and drove off. After a while Köster turned to me.

"We'll drive through the street again. I've done it once already. But it was too soon then. Perhaps they'll be about again now."

It began slowly to snow. Köster drove the car almost noiselessly. He declutched, and often even shut off the en gine. He did not want to be heard, though the four we were looking for didn't know, of course, that we had a car. We glided along soundlessly like a white ghost through the ever more thickly falling snow. I took a hammer out of the tool box and laid it beside me to be ready to spring out of the car and strike at once.

We passed along the street in which it had happened. Under the street lamp was still a black patch of blood. Köster switched off the lights. We ran

along close by the kerb and surveyed the street. Not a soul was to be seen. Only from a lighted pub we heard voices.

Köster pulled up at the crossing. "Stay here," said he; "I want to have a look in the pub."

"I'll come with you," I replied.

He gave me a look that I recognised from the times when he would go on patrol by himself. "I won't settle anything in the pub," said he. "He might get away from me still. I only want to see if he is there. Then we'll wait for him. You stay here with Gottfried."

I nodded and he disappeared in the scurry of snow. The flakes flew in my face and melted on my skin. I suddenly couldn't bear Gottfried's being covered up, as if he didn't belong to us any more, and I pushed the coat from his head. The snow now fell on his face also, on his eyes and his lips, but it did not melt. I took a handkerchief and wiped it away, and put the coat over him again.

Köster came back. "Nothing doing?"

"No," said he.

He got in. "Now we'll just drive round the other streets. I've got a feeling we must be going to meet them any minute."

The car bellowed and was immediately throttled down again. Softly we stole through the white, eddying night, from street to street; at corners I held Gottfried tight, so that he should not slip off; and every now and then we would pull up a hundred yards beyond a pub and Köster would run back with long strides to look in. He was obsessed with grim, cold hate; he did not think first of taking Gottfried home; then twice he started to do so, but turned again because he fancied that just at that moment the four might be under way.

Suddenly, in a long bare street, we saw a dark group of people far ahead. Köster at once switched off the ignition; and soundlessly, without lights we came up. The people did not hear us. They were talking together. "There are four," I whispered to Köster.

At the same moment the car bellowed, raced the last two hundred metres, rode up on to the pavement and with a grinding skid stopped not a yard from the shouting people. Köster hung half out of the car, his body a steel bow ready to spring, and his face unrelenting as death.

It was four harmless old people. One of them was drunk. They started to curse. Köster did not reply. We drove on.

"Otto," said I, "we won't get him to-night. I don't believe he'd trust

himself on the streets."

"Yes, perhaps," he replied after a while, and turned the car.

We drove to Köster's. His room had its own entrance, so we did not need to wake anybody. As we were getting out I said: "Why didn't you want to tell the police what he looked like? We would have had help then in the search. And we did see him well enough."

Köster looked at me. "Because we're going to settle that by ourselves, without any police. Do you think—" His tone was quite soft, restrained and terrible— "Do you think I'd hand him over to the police, anyway? So he'll get a few years' gaol? You know very weU how all these cases end. These chaps know they'll find easy judges. We're having none of that. And what's more if the police did find him, I'd swear it wasn't he, so I could get him after. Gottfried dead and he alive . . . We're having none of that."

We lifted the stretcher from the seats and carried it in through the whirling snow and the wind, and it was as if we were back in Flanders carrying to the rear a dead comrade from the front line.

We bought a coffin and a grave in the parish cemetery. Gottfried had often said, when we had discussed it, that crematoriums were not for soldiers. He meant to lie in the earth on which he had lived so long.

It was a clear sunny day when we buried him. We put Km in his old service uniform with the sleeve torn by shell splinters and still stained with blood. We shut the coffin ourselves and carried him down the stairs. There were not many who came with us: Ferdinand, Valentin, Alfons, Fred the bartender, Georg, Jupp, Frau Stoss, Gustav, Stefan Grigoleit, and Rosa.

At the gate of the cemetery we had to wait some time. There were two other funerals there before us, one with a black motor hearse, the other with black-and-silver-draped horses and an endless procession of mourners who seemed to keep themselves well amused.

We lifted the coffin from the car and lowered it with ropes ourselves. The gravedigger was satisfied, as he had enough to do at the other graves. We had got a parson too. We didn't know what Gottfried would have said to that, but Valentin had been for it. We had at least asked him not to make any speeches. He was only to read a passage from Scripture.

The parson was an elderly, shortsighted chap. As he approached the grave side he tripped over a clod of earth and would have fallen in had not

Köster and Valentin caught him. As it was the Bible and his spectacles which he was about to put on slipped from his hand. They fell into the grave. Dismayed he stared after them.

"Never mind, Herr Pastor," said Valentin, "we'll make good the things for you."

"It's not the book so much," replied the parson gently, "but I need the glasses."

Valentin broke a twig from the cemetery hedge. Then he knelt down by the grave and contrived to hook the spectacles by one of the arms and lift them out from among the wreaths. They were gold-rimmed. The Bible had slipped sideways in between the coffin and the earth; to get it one would have to lift out the coffin again and go in after it. Not even the parson wanted that. He stood there bewildered. "Should I say a few words instead?"

"Don't worry, Herr Pastor," said Ferdinand. "He's got the whole Testament down there now."

The upturned earth smelt strong. In one of the clods a white May-bug larva was crawling. When the earth was thrown in again he would still go on living down there, hatch out, and next year break through and come into the light. But Gottfried Lenz was dead. He was extinguished. We were standing by his grave, we knew that his body, his hair, his eyes were still there, changed already, but there still, and yet for all that, he was gone and would never return. It was past comprehending. Our skin was warm, our thoughts were busy, our hearts pumping blood through the arteries; we were there as before, as we were yesterday; we were not suddenly wanting an arm, we hadn't become blind or dumb, everything was as usual, soon we should go away—and Gottfried Lenz would stay behind and never come again. It was past comprehending.

The clods fell hollow on the coffin. The gravedigger had given us spades, and now we buried him—Valentin, Köster, Alfons, and I—as we had buried many a comrade before. Droning, an old Army song beat through my brain, an old, melancholy soldiers' song that he had often sung—"Argonnerwald, Argonnerwald, a quiet graveyard art thou now . . ."

Alfons had brought a simple, black wooden cross, a cross such as those that stand by the hundred'thousand on the endless rows of graves in France. We placed it at the head of the grave and hung Gottfried's old steel helmet on top.

"Come on," said Valentin at last in a hoarse voice.

"Yes," said Köster. But he still stayed. We all stayed.

Valentin looked down the line of us. "And what for?" said he slowly. "What for? Damn it."

No one answered.

Valentin made a weary gesture. "Come on."

We walked along the gravel path to the exit. At the gate Fred, Georg and the rest were waiting for us. "He could laugh so wonderfully," said Stefan Grigoleit, and the tears flowed down his helpless angry face.

I looked round. No one was following us.

Chapter XXV

In February I was sitting in our workshop with Köster for the last time. We had had to sell it, and now were waiting for the auctioneer who was to put up for sale the fittings and the taxicab. Köster had prospects of a job in the spring as racing motorist with a small firm of car manufacturers. I was staying on at the International, and meant to try to get some additional work during the day in order to earn a bit more.

A few people gradually assembled in the yard. The auctioneer came. "Are you going out, Otto?" I asked.

"What for? It's all out there, and he knows his business."

Köster looked tired. You could not easily tell with him, but if you knew him well, you could see. His face looked even more tense and hard than usual. Night after night he had been out, always in the same neighbourhood. He had long since found out the name of the fellow who had shot Gottfried. But he couldn't find him, because the other, for fear of the police, had changed his quarters and was in hiding somewhere. Alfons had dug all that out. He was waiting likewise. It was quite possible that the other chap was not in the city any longer. That Köster and Alfons were after him he did not know. They were waiting for him to come back when he would think himself safe.

"I think I'll go out and watch, Otto," said I.

"All right."

I went into the yard. Our workbenches and the rest of the stuff were piled up in the middle. On the right by the wall stood the taxi. We had washed it clean. I examined the upholstery and the tyres. "Our jolly old milch cow," Gottfried had always called it. It wasn't so easy to part with.

Some one clapped me on the shoulder. I turned round in surprise. An unpleasantly flashy young man in a belted overcoat confronted me. He blinked his eyes and twirled a bamboo cane in the air. "Hello! We know one another."

An inkling rose in my memory. "Guido Thiess of the Augeka."

"Good for you!" declared the fellow smugly. "Met over this self-same bus. A nasty piece of work you had with you then, I must say. All I could do not to land him a couple."

Involuntarily my face contracted at the thought of him landing Köster a couple. Thiess interpreted it as a smile and on his side disclosed a rather lamentable set of teeth. "Still, bygones are bygones, Guido bears no grudges. You did pay an enormous price for the old grandfather, though. Was there anything left in it for yourselves?"

"Yes," said I. "The car is good."

Theiss gave a deprecating smirk. "If you'd taken my advice you would have had more. And me too. However, bygones are bygones. Forgive and forget. But to-day we can do the trick. We'll take it up to five hundred marks, eh? There's not a soul else to bid. Agreeable?"

It dawned on me. He imagined we had passed the car on again then, and he did not realise that the workshop was ours. On the contrary he supposed we meant to buy it again.

"The car's still worth fifteen hundred," said I. "Not counting the tax."

"Exactly," declared Guido eagerly. "We go up to five hundred, I suggest. If we get it, I pay you three hundred cash on the spot."

"Can't do it," said I. "I've got a client for the car."

"In that case—" He wanted to make fresh proposals.

"It's no good." I walked across to the middle of the yard. Up to twelve hundred hie had a free hand, I knew that now.

The auctioneer began to put up the things. First the fittings. They didn't fetch much. The tools either. Then came the cab. The first offer was three hundred marks.

"Four hundred," said Guido.

"Four hundred and fifty," bid a chap in overalls after a long hesitation.

Guido went up to five hundred. The auctioneer asked around. The chap in overalls said nothing. Guido winked at me and held up four fingers. "Six hundred," said I.

Guido shook his head and went to seven hundred. I bid further. Guido followed desperately. At a thousand he made imploring gestures and indicated with his finger that I might still earn one hundred. He bid one thousand and ten.

By eleven hundred he was red and hostile, but still squeezed out eleven hundred and ten. I went to eleven hundred and ninety,'expecting from him a bid of twelve hundred. Then I meant to stop.

But Guido was now furious. It annoyed him that, according to his reading, he was being squeezed out; and he suddenly offered thirteen

hundred. I calculated swiftly. If he really intended to buy, he would certainly have stopped at twelve hundred. Now he merely meant to drive me up, out of revenge. He supposed from our conversation that fifteen hundred was my limit and saw. no' danger to himself.

"Thirteen hundred and ten," said I.

"Fourteen hundred" bid Guido swiftly.

"Fourteen hundred and ten," I replied hesitantly. I was afraid I might be left hanging.

"Fourteen hundred and ninety!" Guido looked at me, triumphant and mocking. He imagined he had salted my soup good and properly.

I fixed his eye and said nothing. The auctioneer asked once, twice, then he raised the hammer. The moment the car was knocked down to Guido his expression changed from triumph to utter amazement.

Completely at a loss, he came over to me. "I thought you meant—"

"No," said I.

He recovered himself and scratched his head. "Damn. It won't be easy to persuade the firm. Thought you would go to fifteen hundred. Still—I have at least pinched the old bus from you this time."

"You were meant to," said I. Guido did not understand. Only when he saw Köster coming did it suddenly dawn on him, and he ran his fingers through his hair. "Good God, the car belonged to you? Ass, utter ass that I am! Sold. Diddled. O Guido, that this should happen to you! Caught by the old old trick. However—no use crying over spilt milk. The wiliest dog falls for the easiest bait. We'll make it up next time."

He sat down to the wheel and drove off. Our eyes followed the car, and we did not feel very happy.

In the afternoon Mathilda Stoss came. We had still to settle with her for the last month. Köster gave her the money and suggested she should apply to the new owner of the workshop for the job of charwoman. We had already installed Jupp with him. But Mathilda shook her head. "No, no, Herr Köster, I've finished. My bones are-getting too stiff."

"What do you think of doing then?" I asked.

"I'm going to my daughter. She's married in Bunzlau. D'you know Bunzlau?"

"No, Mathilda," I replied.

"But Herr Köster?"

"Me neither, Frau Stoss."

"Funny," said Mathilda, "nobody knows Bunzlau. I've asked so many people. Yet my daughter's been married there twelve years. To a clerk."

"Then there will be Bunzlau too, you may be quite sure of that, if a clerk lives there."

"What I say. But it is funny all the same that nobody knows it, eh?"

We agreed. "How is it you haven't been there all these years then?" I asked.

Mathilda smirked. "Well, there was something. But now they want me to see the children. They have four already. And little Eduard must come too."

"I believe there's very good schnapps to be had around Bunzlau," said I. "Damson or something—"

"Nothing like that," said Mathilda. "As a matter of fact that was the something. My son-in-law's a 'teetotaller,' if you please. That's people who don't drink anything."

Köster fetched the last bottle from the empty shelf. "Well, Frau Stoss, in that case we must drink a farewell schnapps together."

"I'm with you," said Mathilda.

Köster put the glasses on the table and filled them. Mathilda poured down the rum as if it were running through a sieve. Her upper lip worked vigorously and her moustache twitched.

"One more?" I asked.

"I won't say no."

She got another big glassful, then she said good-bye.

"All the best in Bunzlau," said I.

"Yes, thanks very much. But it's funny, isn't it, nobody knows it, eh?"

She waddled out. We stood around a while longer in the workshop, "We might as well go too, I suppose," said Köster.

"Yes," I replied. "There's nothing more to do here."

We locked the door and went out. Then we fetched Karl. He was in a garage near by and had not been sold with the rest. We drove to the bank and Köster paid in the money to the Receivers. "I'm going to have a sleep now," said he. "Will you be free after?"

"I've taken the whole evening off to-day."

"Good, then I'll be along at eight."

We ate in a little pub in the country and then drove in again. As we arrived at the first streets one of the front tyres punctured. We changed the wheel. Karl hadn't been washed for a long time and I got pretty dirty. "I must just have a wash, Otto," said I.

Near by was a rather large Café. We went in and sat at a table by the entrance. To our surprise the place was almost completely full. A woman's band was playing and there was great activity; the orchestra had coloured paper caps, some of the guests were in fancy dress, paper stream^ ers flew from table to table, balloons ascended, waiters ran to and fro with trays piled high and the entire place was filled with movement, laughter and noise.

"What's on here, then?" asked Köster.

A fair girl alongside us showered us with a cloud of confetti.

"Where do you come from?" she laughed. "Don't you know it's Shrove Tuesday?"

"Ach, so," said I. "In that case I guess I'll wash my hands." I had to cross the entire room to get to the lavatory. For a while I was held up by some people who were drunk and trying to hoist a woman on to a table to make her sing. The woman resisted, shrieking; the table fell over, and with the table the whole party. I was waiting for the gangway to clear, when suddenly it was as if I had received an electric shock. I stood there stiff and rigid; the restaurant sank; the noise, the music, nothing remained, only indistinct moving shadows were there; but distinct, monstrously sharp and clear, remained one table, and at the table a young fellow with a fool's cap awry on his head, one arm about a half-tipsy girl, glassy stupid eyes, very thin lips, and under the table bright yellow, loud, highly polished leather leggings.

A waiter bumped into me. Drunkenly I moved on and stopped again. I was burning hot, yet my whole body trembled. My hands were dripping wet. And now I saw the others at the table. I heard them singing in chorus with defiant faces some song or other and beating time on the table with their beer glasses. Again someone bumped into me. "Don't block, up the passage," he growled.

I walked on mechanically, I found the lavatory, I washed my hands and only realised it when I had almost boiled the skin off. Then I went back.

"What's the matter?" asked Köster.

I could not answer. "Are you ill?" he asked.

I shook my head and looked at the table alongside where the fair girl was

still eyeing us. Suddenly Köster turned pale. His eyes narrowed. He leaned forward. "Yes?" he asked quite softly.

"Yes," I replied.

"Where?"

I looked in the direction.

Slowly Köster rose. It was like a snake preparing to strike.

"Careful," I whispered. "Not here, Otto."

He made a quick movement with his hand and went slowly forward. I held myself in readiness to start after him. A woman clapped a green-red paper cap on his head and hooked on to him. She fell back without his having touched her and stared after him. He walked in a slow curve through the room and came back.

"Not there now," said he.

I stood up and surveyed the room. Köster was right. "Do you suppose he recognised me?" I asked.

Köster gave a shrug. He now noticed for the first time the cap on his head and wiped it off.

"I don't understand it," said I. "I was only a minute or two at the most in the lavatory."

"You were away over a quarter of an hour."

"What?" I looked across once more at the table. "The others have gone too. There was a girl with them, she's not there either. If he had recognised me surely he would have disappeared alone."

Köster beckoned the waiter. "Is there a second exit?"

"Yes, over there, on the other side, on Hardenbergstrasse."

Köster took a coin from his pocket and gave it to the waiter. "Come on," said he.

"Shame," said the fair girl at the next table, smiling. "Such solemn cavaliers."

The wind outside struck at us. It seemed icy after the hot fog of the Café. "You go home," said Köster.

"There were several," I replied, getting in with him.

The car shot off. We combed all the streets around the café, wider and wider, but saw nothing. At last Köster stopped.

"Vanished," said he. "But that's nothing. We'll get him sooner or later now."

"Otto," said I, "we ought to drop it."

He looked at me. "Gottfried's dead," said I and marvelled myself at what I was saying. "It won't bring him to life again."

Köster still looked at me.

"Bob," he replied slowly, "I don't even know how many men I've killed. But I remember shooting down- a young Englishman. He had a stoppage and couldn't do a thing more. I was a few yards away from him in my machine and saw his terrified, baby face with the fear in his eyes quite distinctly—it was his first flight, so I learned after, and he was barely eighteen—and into that terrified, helpless, pretty baby face at point-blank range I pumped a burst with my machine-gun, so that his skull smashed like a hen's egg. I didn't know the lad and he hadn't done me any harm. It took me longer than usual to get over that, and to quiet my conscience with the bloody recipe 'war is war.' But if I don't murder the chap who murdered Gottfried—shot him down without cause like a dog—then, I tell you, that affair with the Englishman was an abominable crime. Don't you agree?"

"Yes," said I.

"And now you go home. I must see it to an end. It's like a wall—I can't go on until it's away."

"I'm not going home, Otto. If that's the way of it, we're sticking together."

"Rubbish," said he impatiently. "I can't use you." He raised a hand as he saw me about to speak. "I'll take care. I'll get him alone, without the others, entirely alone. Don't worry."

He pushed me impatiently from the seat and immediately raced off.

I realised that nothing could stop him now. I realised too why he had not taken me. Because of Pat. Gottfried he would have taken.

I went to Alfons'. He was the only one I could talk to. I wanted his advice—if we could do anything. But Alfons was not there. A sleepy girl told me he had gone to a meeting an hour before. I sat at a table to wait.

The place was empty. Only a small electric globe was burning over the bar. The girl had sat down to sleep again. I thought of Otto and Gottfried, I looked out the window at the street, becoming lighter from the full moon now rising over the roofs; I thought of the grave with the black wooden cross and the steel helmet on top; and suddenly I found I was crying. I wiped the drops away.

After some time I heard swift, light footsteps in the house. The door on to the courtyard opened and Alfons entered. His face was shining with

perspiration.

"It's me, Alfons," said I.

"Here, quick!"

I followed him into the room on the right behind the taproom. Alfons went to a cupboard and took out two old Army first-aid packets. "You might just bandage me," said he pulling off his trousers without a sound.

He had a gash on the thigh. "Looks like a running shot," said I.

"It is, too," growled Alfons. "Get busy, bandage away."

"Alfons," said I as I straightened up, "where's Otto?"

"How should I know where Otto is?^ he muttered, squeezing out the wound.

"Weren't you together?"

"No."

"You haven't seen him?"

"Not the faintest. Open up the other packet and lay it on top. It's only a scratch."

Muttering away he busied himself with his wound. "Alfons," said I, "we saw the—you know, about Gottfried—we saw him to-night and Otto's gone after him."

"What?" He was attention at once. "Where is he then? There's no sense, any more. He must clear out."

"He won't clear out."

Alfons threw aside the scissors. "Drive there. You know where he is? He should disappear. Tell him the business with Gottfried's settled. I knew before you. There you see it. Fired, but I hit his hand down. Then I fired. Where is Otto?"

"Somewhere around Mönkestrasse."

"Thank God for that. He left there long ago. But get Otto out of the way all the same."

I went to the telephone and rang up the taxi stand where Gustav usually hung out. He was there. "Gustav," said I, "can you come to the corner of Wiesenstrasse and Bellevueplatz? Quickly? I'm waiting there."

"Right. Be there in ten minutes."

I put up the receiver and went back to Alfons. He was putting on another pair of trousers.

"Didn't know you were on the lookout too," said he. His face was still damp. "Would have been better if you had sat in somewhere. For the sake of

the alibi. Maybe they will be asking after you. You never know."

"What about yourself?" said I.

"Ach, what d'you think." He was talking quicker than usual. "Had him by himself. Waited for him in his room. Up in an attic. No neighbours. Besides, self-defence. He shot the moment he came in. Don't need an alibi. Could have a dozen, if I want."

He looked at me. He sat on the chair, his damp, broad face turned toward me, his sweaty hair, his big mouth drawn awry, and his eyes were almost unendurable, so much torment, suffering and love lay suddenly exposed and hopeless in them. "Now Gottfried will rest," said he softly, and hoarsely. "Had the feeling he didn't rest before."

I stood mutely in front of him.

"Go now," said he.

I walked out through the barroom. The girl was still sleeping, and breathing loudly. Outside the moon had risen high and it was very bright. I went to the Bellevueplatz. The windows of the houses gleamed in the moonlight like silver mirrors. The wind had dropped. It was perfectly still.

Gustav arrived a few minutes later. "What's up, Robert?"

"Our car was stolen this evening. I've just heard it's been seen around the Monkestrasse. Can we drive over?"

"Why, sure." Gustav became eager. "What isn't being pinched these days? Every day a few cars. But mostly they only drive round in them till the petrol's out and then leave them standing."

"Yes; it's, probably that way with ours."

Gustav told me he meant to get married soon. There was a little one on the way, so there was nothing else for it. We drove down the Mönkestrasse and then through the side streets.

"There she is!" called Gustav suddenly.

The car was standing in a dark, concealed side alley. I got out, took my key and switched on the ignition. "O.K., Gustav," said I. "Thanks very much for bringing me."

"Shouldn't we have a drink somewhere?" he asked.

"No, not to-night. To-morrow. I must get off at once."

I put my hand to my pocket to pay him the fare.

"Are you balmy?" he asked.

"Right, thanks, Gustav. Don't wait. *Au revoir*."

"What d'you say to looking around to see if we can't nab the boy that

pinched it?"

"No, no, he'll be gone long since, sure." I was suddenly in a frenzy of impatience. "*Au revoir*, Gustav."

"Have you petrol?"

"Yes, enough. Looked at that already. Good night, then."

He drove off. I waited awhile, then I followed, reached the Mönkestrasse and drove along it in third. As I came back again Köster was at the corner.

"What is it?"

"Get in," said I quickly. "You don't need to hang around any more. I've just been to Alfons. He's—he's met him already."

"And?"

"Yes," said I.

Köster got in without a word. He did not take the wheel. He sat beside me, rather huddled, and I drove. "Shall we go to my place?" I asked.

He nodded. I accelerated and took the road by the canal. The water was one broad silver band. The warehouses on the opposite bank lay deep black in the shadow, but the streets were drifting pale blue light, over which the tyres slipped along as over invisible snow. The broad baroque spires of the cathedral towered up beyond the roofs of the houses. They gleamed green and silver against the receding, phosphorescent sky where the moon hung like a great flaming onion.

"I'm glad it's happened that way, Otto," said I.

"I'm not," replied he. "I should have got him myself."

Frau Zalewski's light was still burning. As I unlocked the door she came out of her sitting room. "There's a telegram for you," said she.

"A telegram?" I asked in surprise. I was still thinking of the night. Then I realised, and ran to my room. The telegram lay in the centre of the table, chalky in the harsh light. I ripped open the seal-stamp; my chest constricted; the letters swam, vanished, came again; I breathed with relief; everything stood still and I gave the telegram to Köster. "Thank God. I thought—"

It was only three words: ROBBY, COME SOON.

I took the sheet again. Relief vanished. Fear returned.

"What can be the matter, Otto? God, why couldn't she say more? There must be something the matter." .

Köster put the telegram on the table. "When did you hear from her last?"

"A week ago. No longer."

"Put a call through. If it's anything, we'll go at once. In the car. Have you a timetable?"

I booked a call to the sanatorium and fetched the timetable from Frau Zalewski's sitting room.

"The next good connection isn't till noon to-morrow," said he. "We'd best take the car and go as far as we can. Then we can always catch the next train. It will save a few hours certainly. What do you say?"

"Yes, in any case." I couldn't imagine how I should endure the idle hours in the train.

The telephone rang. Köster went into my room with the timetable.

The sanatorium answered. I asked for Pat. A minute later the matron told me it would be better if Pat did not speak.

"What's the matter?" I shouted.

"A slight hemorrhage a few days ago. And now some fever."

"Tell her I'm coming," I called. "With Köster and Rarl. We're leaving now. Do you understand?"

"With Köster and Rarl," repeated the voice.

"Yes. But tell her at once. We are leaving now."

"I'll let her know immediately."

I went back to my room. My legs were strangely light. Köster was sitting at the table writing out the trains.

"Pack your bag," said he. "I'll drive home and get mine. I'll be back here in half an hour."

I took the trunk from the cupboard. It was Lenz's with the coloured hotel labels. I packed quickly and settled with Frau Zalewski and the proprietor of the International. Then I sat at the window in my room to wait for Köster.

It was very still. I thought that to-morrow evening I should be with Pat, and suddenly a hot, wild expectancy seized me, before which all else—fear, anxiety, melancholy, despair—vanished. To-morrow evening I would be with her —that was an inconceivable happiness, something I had almost ceased to think possible again. So much had perished since then.

I took my bag and went down. Everything was suddenly near and warm, the staircase, the stale smell of the landing, the cold, glinting rubber-grey of the asphalt, over which Karl was just approaching.

"I've brought a few rugs," said Köster. "It will be cold. Wrap yourself well in."

"We take turns driving, eh?" I asked.

"Yes. But I'll drive to start. I had a sleep this afternoon."

Half an hour later we left the city behind us and the immense silence of the clear moonlit night received us. The road ran white ahead to the skyline. It was so bright we were able to drive without the searchlight. The sound of the engine was like a deep organ note; it did not disturb the stillness, only made it the more sensible.

"You ought to sleep a bit," said Köster.

I shook my head. "Can't, Otto."

"Then stretch out at least, so you'll be fresh early to-morrow. We have all Germany to cross yet."

"I rest like this quite well."

I remained seated beside Köster. The moon glided slowly across the sky. The fields gleamed like mother-of-pearl. Now and then villages flew past,, sometimes a town, asleep, empty, the gullies of the streets between the rows of houses filled with ghostly, immaterial moonlight that made the night an unreal film picture.

Toward morning it turned cold. The meadows were suddenly shimmering with dew, the trees stood out like molten steel against the greying sky; in the woods it began to blow and here and there from chimneys streamers of smoke arose. We changed over and I drove till ten. Then we had a hasty breakfast at. an inn by the roadside and I drove again till twelve. From then on Köster kept the wheel. It went quicker when he drove alone.

In the afternoon, as it was turning dark, we reached the mountains. We had snow chains and shovels with us and enquired how far we would be able to get.

"With chains you might try it," said the secretary of the Automobile Club. "There's very little snow this year. But how it may be the last few kilometres I can't say exactly. You may stick there possibly."

We had a big start on the train and decided to try and get right up. It was cold so there was no fear of fog. The car climbed the zigzags like a clock. Halfway up we put on the snow chains. The road was shovelled clear but at many places it was iced over and the car danced and skidded. Occasionally we had to get out and push. Twice we sank and had to shovel Karl out. At the last village we got them to give us a bucket of sand, for we were now very high and were anxious lest the curves on the descent ahead might be iced. It was now quite dark, the mountain walls towered steep and bare above us into

the night, the pass narrowed, the engine roared in bottom gear, and curve after curve dropped downward. Suddenly the beam of the searchlight slid off the slope and plunged into nothingness, the mountains opened, and lying before us we saw below the network of the village lights.

The car thundered through between the bright shops of the main street. Pedestrians sprang aside; startled by the unusual sight, horses shied; a sleigh set off down a slope on its own; the car raced up the turns to the sanatorium and pulled up in front of the porch. I jumped out; as through a veil I saw curious faces, people, the office, the lift; then I ran down the white corridor, threw open the door, and saw Pat; as I had seen her a hundred times in dream and desire, she came toward me and I held her in my arms like life itself and more than life.

"Thank God," said I, when I had recovered myself. "I imagined you'd be in bed."

She shook her head on my shoulder. Then she straightened, took my face in her hands and looked at me.

"To think you are here," she murmured. "That you have corne!"

She kissed me, cautiously, solemnly, warily, like something one does not want to break. As I felt her lips I started to tremble. It had all gone so quickly, I did not quite realise it yet. I was not properly there yet; I was still full of the journey, the roar of the engine, and the road. I felt like someone coming out of the cold and the night into a warm room: he feels the warmth on his skin, sees it with his eyes, but is not yet warm.

"We drove pretty fast," said I.

She did not answer. She just looked at me in silence. Her solemn face had a piercing expression, her eyes were close in front of me, and it was as if she were seeking, trying to find again something very important. I felt disconcerted. I put my hands on her shoulders and dropped my eyes.

"Are you staying?" she asked.

I nodded.

"Tell me at once. Tell me if you are going away again, so that I may know at once."

I meant to answer that I didn't know yet, and that probably I should have to go again in a few days because I hadn't the money to stay. But I couldn't do it. I just could not while she looked at me like that.

"Yes," said I, "I'm staying. Until we go back together."

Her face did not change. But suddenly it grew bright, as if lighted from within.

"Ach," she murmured, "I couldn't have endured it."

I tried to read over her shoulder the temperature chart at the head of the bed. She noticed it, swiftly drew the sheet from its container, crumpled it and threw it under the bed. "That doesn't signify any more," said she.

I noted where the screwed-up paper lay and determined to pocket it afterwards when she wasn't looking.

"Were you sick?" I asked.

"A bit. But that's over now."

"What did the doctor say?"

She laughed. "Don't ask about the doctor now. Don't ask anything any more. You are here, that's enough."

She was suddenly altered. I don't know if it came from the fact that I had not seen her for so long, but she seemed to me different from before. Her movements were more graceful, her skin warmer, the way she came to me was different; she was no longer just a beautiful young girl that one must protect; something else had entered in, and whereas before I had often not known whether she loved me, now I was conscious of it, she concealed nothing any more, she was more vivacious and nearer to me than ever, more lively, nearer and more beautiful, more delighting, but in a strange way also more disturbing.

"Pat," said I. "I must go down quickly. Köster is below. We must see where we're going to put up."

"Köster? And where is Lenz?"

"Lenz . . ." said I. "Lenz has stayed at home."

She noticed nothing. "Can you venture down, afterwards?" I asked. "Or should we come up here?"

"I can venture anything. I can venture everything now. We'll go down, and then have something to drink. I'll watch, while you drink."

"Good. Then we'll wait below in the hall for you."

She went to the wardrobe to take out a dress. I profited by the occasion to put the crumpled temperature chart in my pocket.

"Right then, Pat; see you in a minute?"

"Robby." She followed me and put her arms round my neck. "I wanted to tell you so many things."

"I you too, Pat. But now we have plenty of time. We'll tell each other things all day long: To-morrow. It doesn't go somehow at the start."

She nodded. "Yes, we'll tell one another everything. Then we'll know all about each other as if we had never been separated."

"So we haven't been, anyway," said I. ,

She smiled. "Not I. I haven't so much strength. It was worse for me. I can't comfort myself with thoughts when I am alone. I'm alone, that's all I know. It is easier to be alone without love." She was smiling still. It was a glassy smile; she held on to it, but you could see through it.

"Pat," said I, "brave old lad."

"It's a long time since I heard that," said she, and her eyes were full of tears.

I went down to Köster. The bags were already unloaded. They had given us two rooms next each other in the annex. "Take a look at that," said I showing him the temperature chart. "It goes up and down."

We walked over the crunching snow up the steps. "Ask the doctor to-morrow," said Köster. "You can't tell anything from the temperature alone."

"I can tell enough," I replied and screwed it up and stuck it in my pocket again.

We washed. Then Köster came to my room. He looked as if he had just got up. "You must dress, Bob," said he.

"Yes." I waked out of my brown study and unpacked my bag.

We went back to the sanatorium. Karl was still standing outside. Köster had hung a rug over the radiator. "When do we go back, Otto?"

He stopped. "I think I'll go to-morrow night or next morning early. You stay here, though."

"How am I to do that, then?" I replied desperately. "My money will hold out only for ten days at the outside. And the sanatorium is paid for Pat only to the fifteenth. I must go back and earn. From the looks of it they won't be wanting any bad pianists here."

Köster bent over Karl's radiator and lifted the rug. "I'll get money for you," said he, straightening. "You can stay here and don't worry on that score."

"Otto," said I, "I know how much you have over from the sale. Not three hundred marks."

"I don't mean that. I'll get some. Don't you trouble about that. In eight days you'll have it here."

"Got a legacy?" I asked with dismal cheerfulness.

"Something of the sort. Leave it to me. You can't just go away again now."

Köster spread the rug again over Karl's radiator. He passed his hand lightly over the bonnet. Then we went into the hall and sat by the fire. "How late is it actually?" I asked.

Köster looked at his watch. "Half-past six."

"Extraordinary," said I. "I thought it was much later."

Pat came down the stairs. She was wearing her fur jacket and walked swiftly across the hall to greet Köster. I saw now for the first time how brown she was. Her skin was the colour of reddish bronze, and she looked almost like a young, very fair Red Indian, But her face had become thinner and her eyes shone too brightly.

"Are you feverish?" I asked.

"A bit," she replied quickly and evasively. "Everybody here is feverish at night. It's only because you have come. Aren't you tired?"

"What from?"

"Then should we go into the bar? You know, this is the first time up here I've had visitors."

"Is there a bar here?"

"Yes, a small one. Or at least a corner that looks like one. That's part of the treatment. Avoid everything that looks like a hospital. You don't get anything if it's not allowed."

The bar was full. Pat greeted several people. One Italian I liked. We sat at a table which had just been vacated.

"What will you have, then?" I asked.

"A cocktail with rum. The sort we always used to drink at 'The Bar.' Do you know the recipe?"

"That's simple," said I to the girl who was serving. "Half port, half Jamaica rum."

"Two," called Pat. "And one Special."

The girl brought us two Porto-Roncos and a bright red drink. "That's for me," said Pat. She pushed the rum toward us. *"Salut!"*

She put down her glass without having drunk, looked around, then swiftly reached for my glass and emptied it. *"Ach,"* said she, "how good that

is."

"What's this you ordered?" I asked trying the suspiciously bright red affair. It tasted of raspberry and lemon. There was not a drop of alcohol in it. , "Very good," said I.

Pat looked at me.

"For the thirst," I added.

She laughed. "Order one more Porto-Ronco. But for yourself. I don't get any."

I beckoned the girl. "One Porto-Ronco and one Special," said I. I saw that a good many Specials were being drunk at the tables.

"I might venture to-day, Robby, yes?" said Pat. "Just to-day? Like in old times. Yes, Köster?"

"The Special is quite good," I replied and drank the second glass.

"I hate it. Poor Robby, what stuff you will have to drink here."

"If we order fast enough, I'll come, into my own soon," said I.

Pat laughed. "Afterwards, with supper, I'm allowed to drink something. Red wine."

We ordered a few more Porto Roncos, then went in to the dining room. Pat looked lovely. Her face beamed. We sat ai one of the small, white, covered tables by the window. It was warm, and below lay the village with its lighted streets in the snow.

"Where's Helga Guttmann then?" I asked.

"Gone away," said Pat after a pause.

"Gone away? So soon?"

"Yes," said Pat and I realised what she meant.

The girl brought the dark red wine. Köster filled the glasses. The tables were now all occupied. Everywhere sat people chattering. I felt Pat's hand on mine.

"Darling," said she very softly and tenderly. "I couldn't stick it any longer."

Chapter XXVI

I came out of the chief physician's room; Köster was waiting for me in the hall. He stood up when he saw me. We went outside and sat on a bench in front of the sanatorium.

"It's bad, Otto," said I. "Worse than I feared."

A group of skiers passed noisily close in front of us. Some oil-besmeared women with powerful, sunburnt faces and big, white sets of teeth. They shouted to one another that they were hungry as wolves. We waited till they were past.

"That sort lives of course," said I. "Live and are well to the very marrow. Make you sick!"

"Did you speak to the chief physician himself?" asked Köster.

"Yes. He explained it all, with plenty of reservations and qualifications. But the upshot is, it has got worse. He even maintained it was better."

"I don't follow."

"He says, if she had stayed below, all hope would have been gone long ago. Here it has gone slower. That he calls better."

Köster drew marks with the heel of his shoe in the hard snow. Then he stood up. "He has hope, then?"

"A doctor always has hope, it belongs to his job. But I have damned little any more. I asked him if he'd done a pneumo-thorax. He said it was no use now. She had one some years ago. Now both lungs are affected. It's the devil, Otto."

An old woman with overtrodden galoshes stopped in front of our seat. She had a blue, decayed face and slate-coloured, extinct eyes, that looked as if they were blind. About her neck she had wound an old-fashioned feather boa. Slowly she raised a lorgnette and examined us. Then she shuffled on.

"Nasty-looking ghost," I spat.

"What else did he say?" asked Köster.

"He explained how it probably came about. He had had quite a lot of patients around the same age. A result of the war. Undernourishment in the growing years. But what's that to do with me? She has to get well." I looked at him. "Of course he told me he had experienced miracles often. With this

disease particularly it happens that sometimes it suddenly stops, encapsules and heals up, even in desperate cases. Jaffé said that too. But I don't believe in miracles."

Köster did not answer. We remained sitting side by side in silence. What could we say? We had both seen too much to be able to do anything in the comforting line.

"She mustn't notice anything, Bob," said Köster at last.

"Of course," I replied.

We continued to sit till Pat came. I thought nothing; I didn't even despair; I was just stupefied and grey and dead.

"There she is," said Köster.

"Yes," said I, standing up.

"Hello!" Pat came toward us and waved. She staggered a little and laughed. "I'm a bit drunk. With the sun. Always when I've been lying in the sun, I roll like an old sailor."

I looked at her, and at a stroke it was all different. I ' didn't believe the doctor any more; I believed the miracle. There she was; she was alive; there she stood laughing— all the rest sank before it.

"What are you making such long faces about?" she asked.

"Town faces, that don't fit here," said Köster. "We can't get used to the sun."

She laughed. "To-day's a good day for me. No temperature. I can go out. Shall we go down to the village and have an *apéritif?"*

"Sure."

"Off we go, then."

"Shouldn't we take a sleigh, though?" asked Köster.

"I can stand it," said Pat.

"I know that," said Köster. "But I've never ridden in one of those things. I'd like to try once."

We beckoned a driver and drove down the hairpin bends to the village. Outside a café that had a little sunny lawn we stopped and got out. All sorts of people were there, and some I recognised from the sanatorium. The Italian from the bar was among them. He was called Antonio, and came to our table to greet Pat. He told us some practical jokers last night had rolled one patient, while he slept, bed and all out of his room into the room of the stone-age schoolmistress.

"Why did they do that?" I asked.

"He's cured and going out in a few days," replied Antonio. "They're always doing that sort of thing."

"It's the famous gallows humour of those who are left behind, darling," said Pat.

"One does get childish up here," observed Antonio apologetically.

Cured, thought I; one is cured and going back. "What do you want to drink, Pat?" I asked.

"A Martini. A good dry Martini."

A radio started to play. Viennese waltzes. They floated through the warm sunny air like soft, bright banners. The waiter brought the Martinis. They were very cold, and beading still as the sun shone on them.

"Lovely to sit like this, isn't it?"

"Grand," I replied.

"But sometimes it's unbearable," said she.

We remained down to lunch. Pat wanted it particularly. Latterly she had had to stay in the sanatorium and this was her first outing; she had told them there she would feel twice as well if only she could lunch in the village. Antonio dined with us. Afterwards we drove up again and Pat went to her room to lie down for two hours. Köster and I fetched Karl from the garage and looked him over. We had to change two broken springs. The garage man had tools and we set to work. Then we filled up with oil and greased the chassis thoroughly. When all was done we ..pushed him out. With hanging ears and spattered with mud he stood in the snow.

"Should we wash him?" I asked.

"No, not en route," said Köster. "He doesn't like it."

Pat joined us. She looked warm and rested. Her dog was jumping around her. "Billy!" I called. He stopped and looked, but he wasn't overfriendly. He did not recognise me, and was quite disconcerted when Pat called my attention to him.

"So soon," said I. "Thank God, human beings have better memories. Where was he yesterday then?"

Pat laughed. "He lay under the bed the whole day. He's jealous when I have visitors, and then retires and sulks."

"You look wonderful," said I.

She glanced at me happily. Then she walked up to Karl. "I would like to sit in it again and drive a little way."

"Why not?" said I. "What do you say, Otto?"

"Of course. You have a thick coat, and here are rugs and wraps enough."

Pat sat forward behind the windshield beside Köster. Karl bellowed. The exhaust gas steamed blue-white in the cold air. The engine was not warm yet. Slowly clapping, the chains began to eat their way through the snow. Spitting, cracking and snarling, Karl crept down to the village and along the main street, a crouching wolf amid the trample of horses and tinkle of sleighbells.

We came out of the village. It was late afternoon and the snowfields glowed red, tinged by the descending sun. Some ricks on the slope lay almost buried in whiteness.. Like tiny commas the last skiers dropped down into the valley. As they did so they passed under the red sun, that appeared once more, mighty beyond the slope, a ball of dusky fire.

"Did you come along here yesterday?" asked Pat.

"Yes."

The car topped the summit of the first ascent. Köster stopped.

The view from here was overpowering. The day before, as we sped along through the glassy, blue evening, we had not even noticed it. We had had eyes for nothing but the road.

Rise beyond rise the manifold valley opened. The ridges of the distant ranges stood out sharp and clear against the pale green sky. They glowed golden. Golden flecks lay dusted over the snowfields at the foot of the peaks. From moment to moment the slopes took on an ever more gorgeous whitish red, and the shadow became ever bluer. The sun stood in the gap between two shimmering peaks and the broad valley with its dips and rises was like some vast, mute, glittering parade before a dying ruler. The violet ribbon of the road wound among the hills, disappeared, reappeared, dark at the bends, past villages, and then ran straight along the saddle of the pass to the horizon.

"I've never been so far from the village before," said Pat. "Is that the road home?"

"Yes."

She was silent and looked along it. Then she got out and held her hand shading her eyes. And so she peered into the north as if she could see already the spires of the city. "How far is it?" she asked.

"About a thousand kilometres. In May we'll go along there. Otto is fetching us."

"In May," she repeated. "My God, in May."

Slowly the sun sank. The valley came to life; shadows that hitherto had been squatting fixed in the folds of the ground started noiselessly to creep out

and climb higher like blue gigantic spiders. It turned cool. "We must get back, Pat," said I.

She looked up and her face was suddenly stricken with pain. I saw at once that she knew everything. She knew she would never escape beyond that pitiless chain of mountains on the skyline, she knew it and meant to hide it, just as we had meant to hide it from her, but for one moment she lost her grip and all the misery of the world broke in her eyes. "Let's go down just a little way," said she. "Just a little way down."

"Come," said I, after a glance at Köster. She got in at the back with me, I bedded her in my arm and pulled the rugs over us both. The car began slowly to descend the mountain, into the valley and the shadows.

"Robby, darling," whispered Pat on my shoulder, "now it's as if we were driving home, back into our life—"

"Yes," said I and covered her up to the hair.

It grew rapidly darker the lower we came. Pat lay completely under the covers. She thrust her hand in to my chest, under the shirt; I felt her hand on my skin, then her breath, her lips, and then her tears.

Cautiously, so she should not notice the turn, Köster swung the car in a long sweep on the market place of the next village and drove slowly back.

The sun had vanished when we drove again over the summit, and already, in the east, pale and clear between the rising clouds, stood the moon. We drove back, the chains ground over the snow with a monotonous sound; the evening became still; I sat motionless, and felt Pat's tears on my heart as if a wound were bleeding there.

An hour later I was sitting in the hall. Pat was in her room and Köster had gone to the weather bureau to find out whether it was going to snow. It had turned misty outside, the moon now had a ring, and, soft and grey as velvet, the night stood at the window. After a while Antonio came and joined me.

A few tables away sat a tight, round, bumptious fellow like a cannon ball, in homespun coat, and knickerbockers too short for him; he had a baby face with pouting lips and cold eyes, and on top a round red head without hair, shiny as a billiard ball. Beside him was a thin woman with deep shadows under the eyes and a troubled, imploring expression. The cannon ball was lively, his head in constant movement, his rosy little hands describing plump gestures. "Marvellous up here, quite superb. The panorama, the air, the attention! You're well off, really—"

"Bernhard," said his wife gently.

"Truly, I wouldn't mind some of it, coddled and looked after!" Oily laughter. "Still, I don't begrudge you—"

"Ach, Bernhard," said his wife dispiritedly.

"What now, come now," the cannon ball clattered gaily on, "you couldn't have better anywhere. Why, you're in Paradise here. Think of us down below there. Out again every morning into the muck. You be thankful you're spared that. But I'm glad to see you getting on so well here."

"Bernhard, I'm not getting on well," said his wife.

"But my child," Bernhard bustled on, "don't you complain. It's we ought to do that. Bankruptcy everywhere, always on the go, taxes—still, we're glad to be able to do it, of course."

The woman said nothing.

"A nice lad," said I to Antonio.

"Is he not!" replied Antonio. "Since the day before yesterday he's been here, talking down every attempt of his wife's with his 'Wonderfully well off you are.' He just refuses to see, you know—neither her fear, her sickness, or her loneliness. And all the time he's probably living in Berlin with another cannon ball just like himself, paying his duty call here every six months, rubbing his hands, jovial, studying only his own convenience. And not listening to anything. You often see it up here."

"How long has his wife been here?"

"About two years."

A troop of young people ran giggling into the hall. Antonio laughed. "They've come from the post. They've been sending a telegram to Roth."

"Who's Roth?"

"He's the next to go out. They've wired him not to come home because of an influenza epidemic in the town, and that he'd best stay on here. One of the usual jokes. Because they have to stay themselves, you see."

I looked out the window at the grey satin-hung mountain. It just isn't true all this, thought I; just isn't real, it doesn't go like this. This is only a stage where they act a bit at death. When men die it's in grim earnest—I should have liked to follow these young folk and shake them by the shoulders and say to them "It is so, isn't it? This is just a charade of death, and you mere facetious amateurs acting at dying? You'll get up again after and bow, won't you ? People just don't die this way, from a bit of fever and noisy breathing—it takes bullets and wounds, I know that."

"Are you sick too?" I asked Antonio.

"Of course," said he smiling.

"Perfectly delicious coffee," rattled the cannon ball alongside. "Nothing like that with us, I tell you. An absolute lotus land I"

Köster came back from the weather bureau. "I must go, Bob," said he. "The glass has dropped and there'll be snow to-night probably. Then to-morrow I wouldn't get through. To-night I'll just make it."

"Right. Is there time for supper together?"

"Yes. I'll pack quickly now."

"I'll come over."

We packed Köster's things and brought them down to the garage. Then we went back to get Pat.

"Give us a call if anything happens, Bob," said Otto.

I nodded.

"The money will be here in a few days. Enough for a while. Do whatever's necessary."

"Yes, Otto." I hesitated. "We've got some phials of morphia back home. Can you send them?"

He looked at me. "What do you want them for?"

"I don't know how it will be here—it may not be necessary. I still have hope of a sort, in spite of everything— always, when I see her—but I wouldn't like her to suffer, Otto. That she should lie around and nothing be there of her but just pain. Perhaps they'd give her some here themselves in that case—but it would be a comfort to me to know I can help her."

"Only that, Bob?" asked Köster.

"Only that, Otto. Truly. I wouldn't ask you otherwise."

He nodded.

"We are only two now," said he, slowly.

"Yes."

"All right, Bob."

We went into the hall and I fetched Pat down. Then we ate quickly, for it was growing steadily more overcast. Köster drove Karl from the garage up to the door.

"Good luck, Bob," said he.

"Same to you, Otto."

"*Au revoir*, Pat." He shook hands and looked at her. "I'll come and fetch you in the spring."

"Good-bye, Köster." She held his hand fast. "I'm so very glad to have seen you again. Give my greetings to Gottfried Lenz too."

"Yes," said Köster.

She still held his hand. Her lips quivered. And suddenly she took a step forward and kissed him. "Good-bye," she murmured in a choking voice.

Köster's face suddenly lit up with a bright red flame. He meant to say something, but then turned away, got into the car, set off with a bound and raced down the hairpin bends without looking round. We watched him. The car thundered along the main street and climbed the zig-zag ascent like a solitary firefly,-the pallid field of the searchlight moving over the grey snow ahead. At the summit the car stopped and Köster waved. He stood out dark against the light. Then he vanished, and for a loag time still we, heard only the hum of the engine growing steadily fainter.

Pat stood leaning forward, listening as long as anything was still to be heard. Then she turned to me.

"The last ship has left, Robby."

"The second last," I replied. "I'm the last. And do you know what I propose doing? I'm going to look for a new anchorage. I don't like the room in the annex any more. I don't see why we shouldn't live together. I'm going to try and get a room in your neighbourhood."

She smiled. "Quite impossible. You'll never do it. How are you going to start?"

"Would you be glad if I did manage it?"

"What a question! It would be grand, darling. Almost as good as at Mother Zalewski's."

"Right. Then just leave me to get busy for half an hour."

"All right. I'll play a game of chess with Antonio. That's one thing I've learnt up here."

I went to the office and explained that I should be staying rather longer and would like a room on the same floor with Pat. An elderly, flat-chested matron refused indignantly because of the house regulations.

"Who made the regulations?" I asked.

"The Management," retorted the matron, smoothing the folds of her dress.

Rather reluctantly she did finally inform me that the doctor in charge had

discretion in exceptional cases.

"But he has gone now," she added. "At night he goes home and is not to be disturbed except on business."

"Good," said I, "then I'll trouble him on business. A matter of the house regulations."

The doctor lived in a small house next to the sanatorium. He received me immediately and gave me permission at once.

"Judging from the start, I didn't expect it to be quite so easy," said I.

He laughed. "Aha, you ran into old Rexroth probably? Well, I'll just telephone."

I returned to the office. Rexroth beat a dignified retreat as she caught sight of my defiant face. I arranged everything with the secretary and gave the manservant the job of shifting my stuff across and getting me a few bottles of drink. Then I went to Pat in the hall.

"Have you managed it?" she asked.

"Not yet, but in a few days I will."

"That's a pity." She overturned the chessmen and stood up.

"What should we do?" I asked. "Go to the bar?"

"We often play cards," said Antonio. "The John's coming, you can feel it. Cards are best then."

"Cards? Pat?" said I in surprise. "What cards can you play? Black Peter and Patience, eh?"

"Poker, darling," announced Pat.

I laughed. "She can, really," said Antonio. "Only she's a bit reckless. She bluffs terribly."

"So do I," I replied. "We must try our hand."

We sat in a corner and started playing. Pat did not poker badly at all. But she bluffed to glory. After an hour Antonio pointed out the window. It was snowing. Slowly, as if still hesitating, the fat flakes fell almost vertically clown. "There's not a breath of wind," said Antonio. "That means a lot of snow."

"Where will Köster be now?" asked Pat.

"He's well over the pass," said I. For an instant I saw Karl quite distinctly trailing with Köster through the snow, and suddenly it all seemed unreal—that I should be sitting here, that Köster should be on the road and that Pat should be there. She smiled at me happily, pressing her hand with the cards on to the table.

"Fire away, Robby."

The cannon ball bowled in, came to rest behind our table, and began rocking benevolently back and forth on his toes. His wife was asleep no doubt, and he was in search of entertainment. I laid down the cards and stared at him poisonously till he vanished.

"You're not very friendly," said Pat, pleased.

"No," said I. "Didn't mean to be."

We went into the bar and drank a few Specials. Then Pat had to go to bed. I took leave of her in the hall. She walked slowly up the stairs, and looked round and stopped before she turned into the corridor. I waited a bit, then got my room key at the office. The little secretary smiled.

"Number seventy-eight," said she.

It was the room next to Pat's. "At Fräulein Rexroth's suggestion, no doubt?"

"No, Fräulein Rexroth is in the Mission House," she replied.

"Mission Houses have their uses sometimes," said I and went swiftly up. My things were already unpacked. Half an hour later I knocked on the communicating door between the two rooms.

"Who's there?" called Pat.

"The surveillance police," I replied.

The key grated in the lock and the door flew open. "You, Robby?" stammered Pat, completely taken by surprise.

"Me," said I. "Conqueror of Fräulein Rexroth. Cognac and Porto-Ronco proprietor." I drew the bottles from the pockets of my dressing gown. "And now tell me at once, how many men have been here already?"

"None, except the football club and the philharmonic orchestra," announced Pat laughing. *"Ach,* darling, now the old times are here again."

She fell asleep on my shoulder. I stayed awake a long time. In one corner of the room a small lamp was burning. The snowflakes knocked lightly on the window and in the soft golden brown twilight time seemed to stand still. Occasionally the pipes of the central heating cracked. Pat turned in her sleep, and slowly, rustling, the bedclothes slipped to the floor.

Ach, thought I, bronze, shimmering skin. Slender miracle of the knee. Soft mystery of the breast. I felt her hair on my shoulder, and the pulse of her blood under my lips. You are to die? thought I. You cannot die. You are happiness.

Cautiously I pulled up the clothes again. Pat murmured something and

was silent again and put her hand slowly, in sleep, around my shoulder.

Chapter XXVII

The next few days it snowed uninterruptedly. Pat was feverish and had to stay in bed. Most of the patients had temperatures.

"It's the weather," said Antonio. "The *föhn*. Too warm. Regular fever weather."

"Go out for a while, darling," said Pat. "Can you ski?"

"No. How should I be able to? I was never in the mountains before."

"Antonio will show you. It will be fun for him. And he likes you."

"I'd much rather stay here."

She sat up in bed. The nightgown slipped from her shoulders. Damned thin they were. Damned thin, too, the back of the neck. "Do, for my sake, Robby. I don't like you sitting here by the sickbed. Yesterday and the day before— that's already more than enough."

"But I like sitting here," I replied. "Haven't the least desire to go out into the snow."

She was breathing loudly and I could hear the irregular rasping.

"I've had more experience of this than you," said she, propping herself on her elbows. "It's better for both of us. You'll see after." She tried hard to smile. "This afternoon and to-night you can sit here all you want. In the morning it makes me restless, darling. One looks so dreadful in the morning when one's feverish. At night it's different. I know it's superficial and silly— but I don't want to look a fright when you see me."

"But Pat!" I stood up. "All right then, I'll go out a bit with Antonio. Then I'll be back here again at midday. Let's hope I don't break every bone with these ski things."

"You'll soon learn it, darling." Her face lost its anxious look. "You'll soon ski wonderfully."

"And you'll soon have me out of here wonderfully, eh?" said I, kissing her. Her hands were moist and hot and her lips dry and cracked.

Antonio lived on the second floor. He lent me a pair of boots and they fitted well, for we were much of a size. We went to the nursery slope which lay some way beyond the village. Antonio eyed me as we walked along. "Fever makes you restless," said he. "Queer things happen here sometimes on

days like this." He laid the skis down in front of him and fastened them on. "The worst part is the waiting and not being able to do anything. It drives you crazy and does you in."

"The healthy ones, too," said I. "To have to stand by and be unable to do anything . . ."

He nodded. "A good few of us work/' he went on; "some read whole libraries. But the majority turn into schoolchildren again, they play truant from their rest-cure as they used to from the gym lesson, and fly, giggling in alarm, into pantries and cupboards if a doctor happens along. Secret smoking, drinking on the quiet, forbidden midnight parties, gossip, silly practical jokes —just to escape the emptiness. And the truth. A pretense; a frivolous, and perhaps even heroic, ignoring of death. After all what else is left for them?"

Yes, thought I, after all what else is left for all of us?

"Should we have a try?" asked Antonio, propping his ski poles in the snow.

"Yes."

He showed me how to fasten the skis and how to keep my balance. It wasn't difficult. I fell fairly often, but gradually I got accustomed and could do it a bit. After an hour we stopped.

"Enough," remarked Antonio. "As it is, you'll know tonight where your muscles are."

I loosed the skis and felt the blood streaming through my veins.

"It was good to come out, Antonio," said I.

He nodded. "We might do it every morning. It takes your mind off things."

"Should we have a drink somewhere?" I asked.

"We could. A Dubonnet at Forster's."

We drank the Dubonnet and went back to the sanatorium. At the office the secretary told me the postman had 'been asking for me; he had left a message I should go to the post office, there was some money for me there. I looked at my watch. There was still time, and I went back. At the post office they paid over to me two thousand marks. There was a letter from Köster as well. I was not to worry; there was more if I wanted. I had only to write.

I stared at the notes. Wherever did he get it? And so quickly. I knew our resources. And suddenly it dawned on me. I saw Bollwies again, the racing

manufacturer of ready-to-wear dresses, that evening at "The Bar" when he lost his bet, tapping covetously around Karl and saying: "I'm a buyer for the car any time." Yes, damn it, Köster had sold Karl. Hence the money so promptly. Karl, of whom he had said he would sooner lose a hand than the car —Karl was gone. He was now in the fat hands of the dressmaker, and Otto, whose ear knew him miles off, would now be hearing him howling through the streets like an outcast dog.

I pocketed Köster's letter and the little packet with the morphia phials. At a loss what to do I still stood at the guichet. I should have liked to send the money back, but it couldn't be done; we needed it. I smoothed out the notes and put them away. Then I went. Damn—from now on I would have to make a wide detour round every motor car. Cars are friends, but Karl had been more than that to us. He had been a comrade. Karl, the Road Spook. We belonged together. Karl and Köster, Karl and Lenz, Karl and Pat . . . Angry and helpless I stamped the snow from my feet. Karl was gone. And Pat? With blinded eyes I stared at the sky, this grey, endless sky of a crazy god, who had made life and death for his amusement.

In the afternoon the wind turned, it became clearer and colder, and by night Pat was better. Next morning she was able to get up, and some days later when Roth, the chap who was cured, went away, she was even able to go down to the station.

A whole swarm accompanied Roth. That was the custom here whenever anyone left. Roth himself wasn't especially cheerful. He had had bad luck in his way. Two years before, a specialist, answering his question, how long he still had had to live, had said two years at the outside, provided he looked after himself carefully. To make quite sure he then asked a second doctor. This one gave him even less. Roth thereupon realised all his resources, divided them into two years, and lit out for all he was worth, without troubling any more, about his illness. Finally with a bad haemorrhage he landed in the sanatorium. And here, instead of dying, he began steadily to get better. When he arrived he had weighed ninety pounds. Now he weighed a hundred and fifty and was in such good shape he was able to go out again. But his money was gone.

"What'll I do though?" he asked me, scratching his ginger head. "You've just come up, haven't you? How is it down there, then?"

"It's changed a lot," I replied, contemplating his round, chubby face with its colourless eyelashes. He had got well again, though he had been given up —for the rest he did not interest me.

"I'll have to find myself a job," said he. "What are the chances that way?"

I gave a shrug. What use was it my telling him he probably wouldn't find one? He'd discover that for himself soon enough.

"Have you connections, friends, or anything?" I asked.

"Friends—well, you know." He laughed scornfully. "When you suddenly have no more money, they hop away like fleas off a dead man."

"Then it'll be difficult."

He puckered his forehead. "Just can't picture it, you know. I've only got a few hundred marks left. And I never learned anything but handing out money. Looks as if my old quack was right when be said I'd kick inside two years, though in another way perhaps—by a bullet."

I suddenly was seized with an insane fury against this blathering idiot. Didn't be realise then what life is? I saw Antonio walking ahead of me with Pat, saw their shoulders and the back of their necks, grown thin in the grip of the disease; I knew how much they wanted to live, and I could have murdered Roth at that moment without turning a hair, if Pat might thereby have been made well again.

The train pulled out. Roth was waving his hat. Those left behind called after him all kinds of things, laughing. One girl ran tottering a short way after the train, calling in a cracked, thin voice: *"Au revoir! Au revoir!"* Then she came back and burst into tears. The others made wry faces.

"Hello!" called Antonio. "Anyone crying on the station must pay a forfeit. An old sanatorium rule. A forfeit to the funds for the next party."

With a large gesture he held out his hand. The others were laughing again. Even the girl, the tears still trickling down her poor pinched face, smiied and took a shabby purse from her coat pocket.

It made me miserable. These faces around—it wasn't a laugh at all, it was a convulsive, tortured jollity—not smiles but grimaces;

"Come on," said I to Pat taking her firmly by the arm.

We walked in silence down the village street. At the nearest shop I went in and bought a bag of sweetmeats.

"Roasted almonds," said I, offering her the packet. "You like them, don't

you?"

"Robby," said she. Her lips quivered.

"One moment," I replied, and went swiftly into the florist's alongside. Moderately calm again, I came back with my roses.

"Robby," said Pat.

I grinned lugubriously. "Turning into a cavalier in my old age, Pat."

I don't know what had come over us suddenly. Apparently it was that damned train going away. It was like a leaden shadow, a grey wind that blew down everything we most wanted still to stand. We were two runaway children, hardly knowing in from out, but anxious to keep up a brave show.

"Come, let's have a drink, quick," said I.

She nodded. We went into the nearest café and sat at an empty table by the window.

"What'll you have, Pat?"

"Rum," said she, and looked at me.

"Rum," I repeated, reaching for her hand under the table. She pressed it firmly in mine.

The rum came. It was Bacardi with lemon. "Old darling," said she, raising her glass.

"Good old lad," said I.

We sat on awhile.

"Queer, sometimes, isn't it?" said Pat.

"Yes. Does come once in a while. But it passes again."

She nodded. We went on, walking close side by side. Steaming sleigh-horses trotted past us. Tired sunburnt skiers; an ice hockey team in red and white sweaters, spitting life . . .

"How do you feel, Pat?" I asked.

"Good, Robby."

"If we could only become like that, eh?"

"Yes, darling." She pressed my arm against her.

The street emptied. The evening glow lay like a pink quilt on the snowy mountains.

"Pat," said I, "I didn't tell you we have stacks of money now. Köster sent some."

She stopped. "That's perfectly wonderful, Robby. Then we'll be able really to go out for once?"

"Why sure," said I, "as often as we like."

"Then we'll go on Saturday to the Kursaal. The last big-ball of the season is being held there then."

"But you aren't allowed out at night."

"Most of them aren't, but they go all the same."

I made a serious face.

"Robby, all the time you weren't here I did everything they told me. I was nothing but one anxious prescription. And it hasn't helped. I've only got worse. Don't interrupt me; I know what you're going to say. I know, too, what is involved. But the time I have still, this time with you— let me do as I will."

Her face was flushed in the descending sun. It was grave and still and full of an immense tenderness. What are we saying? thought I with dry mouth; it's not possible we should be standing here discussing a thing that never can, and never shall be. And it's Pat who is saying these things! Resigned, almost without regret, as if there was nothing to oppose to it any more, not even the pitiful shreds of a deceitful hope—Pat of all people, little more than a child still, whom it's my business to shield—Pat, suddenly gone far from me, familiar already and reconciled with the nameless thing on the other side.

"You mustn't say things like that," I murmured at last. "I only thought, perhaps we ought to ask the doctor first."

"We're asking nobody any more, nobody." She shook her lovely, frail head and looked at me with her dear eyes. "I don't want to know any more. I only want to be happy still."

In the evening there was whispering and running to and fro in the corridors of the sanatorium. Antonio arrived with an invitation. There was to be a party, in a Russian's rooms.

"Can I go then, so simply?" I asked.

"Here?" replied Pat.

"You can do lots of things here you can't elsewhere," said Antonio, smiling.

The Russian was a dark, older man. He occupied two rooms spread with numerous carpets. On a chest stood schnapps bottles. The rooms were in semidarkness, only candles burning. Among the guests was a beautiful young Spaniard. It was her birthday that was being celebrated.

It was a peculiar atmosphere in these nickering rooms— reminiscent of a

dugout, in their half-light and the curious fellowship of these people all united in a common destiny.

"What will you "drink?" asked the Russian. He had a warm deep voice.

"Whatever you have."

He brought a bottle of cognac and a carafe of vodka.

"Are you well?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied slightly embarrassed.

He offered me cigarettes with long cardboard tips. We drank. "I suppose there's a lot here strikes you as rather strange?" he observed.

"Not so much," I replied. "I'm not used to a specially normal life."

"Yes," said he with a dark glance at the Spanish girl. "It's a world to itself up here. It changes people."

I nodded.

"A queer disease," he added thoughtfully. "It makes people more alive. And better sometimes. A mystic'disease. It melts away the dross." He rose, nodded to me, and went over to the Spanish girl, who smiled at him.

"A heavy theatrical, eh?" asked someone behind me.

A face with no chin. A pimply forehead. Restless, feverish eyes.

"I'm his guest," said I. "Aren't you?"

"He catches the women with it though," persisted the other, unheeding, "he does catch them. The little one there too."

I made no answer. "Who's that?" I asked Pat when he moved off.

"A musician. Violinist. Hopelessly in love with the Spaniard. The way one does fall in love up here. But she won't look at him. She's in love with the Russian."

"So should I be in her place."

Pat laughed.

"Seems to me that's a chap you might fall in love with," said I. "Don't you agree?"

"No," she replied.

"Have you never been in love here?"

"Not very much."

"It wouldn't make any difference to me," said I.

"That's a nice confession." Pat straightened. "Then it ought to make a difference to you."

"I don't mean it that way. I can't explain how I do mean it. And I can't explain, because I still don't know what you can find in me."

"Leave that to me," she replied.

"Do you know then?"

"Not exactly," she replied with a smile. "Else it wouldn't be love any more."

The Russian had left the bottles. I poured myself a few glasses. The atmosphere in the room oppressed me. I did not like seeing Pat here among all these sick people.

"Don't you like it here?" she asked.

"Not very much. I need to get used to it first."

"My poor darling—" She stroked my hand.

"I'm not poor while you're here," said I.

"Isn't Rita very beautiful?"

"No," said I. "You are more beautiful."

The young Spaniard had a guitar on her knees. She plucked a few chords. Then she began singing and it was as if some dark bird hovered in the room. She sang Spanish songs in a muted voice—the hoarse, infirm voice of the sick. I don't know if it was the strange, melancholy songs, or the tremulous, twilight voice of the girl, or the shadows of the sick people cowering darkly in armchairs and on the floor, or the big, bowed, dark face of the Russian, but suddenly it came over me that all her song was only a sobbing, still exorcism of the fate standing outside beyond the curtained windows, waiting—a plea, a protest, and fear, fear of being alone with the quietly devouring Nothingness.

The next morning Pat was in high spirits. She busied herself with her dress. "It's got too wide, much too wide," she murmured, eyeing it in the looking-glass. Then she turned to me. "Did you bring a dinner suit with you, darling?"

"No," said I. "Didn't know I'd have any use for one here."

"Then go to Antonio. He'll lend you one. You are the same figure."

"But he'll want it himself."

"He's wearing tails." She pinned a pleat. "And then go for a ski. I must get busy here. And I can't while you're about."

"Your Antonio—" said I. "I'm robbing him properly. I wonder what we should do without him?"

"He is a good boy, isn't he?"

"Yes," I replied. "That just describes him—good boy."

"I don't know what I should have done if it hadn't been for him all the

time I was alone."

"Don't let us think about that any more," said I. "It is so far back."

"Yes." She kissed me. "And now go and ski."

Antonio was already expecting me.

"I thought you would probably not have a dinner suit," said he. "Just try on the coat."

The coat was a bit tight but it would do. Antonio whistled cheerfully and hung out the suit.

"It will be good fun to-morrow," he declared. "Luckily the little secretary is on night duty in the office. Old Rex-roth wouldn't let us out. Officially all that sort of thing is forbidden. But unofficially we aren't children, of course."

We went skiing. I had learnt quite well, and we did not use the nursery slope any more. On the way we encountered a chap with diamond rings, checked breeches, and a flowing artist's tie.

"Funny-looking things there are up here," said I.

Antonio laughed. "He's a very important chap. A corpse companion."

"A what?" I asked in astonishment.

"A corpse companion," replied Antonio. "You see, there are patients here from all over the world. Especially from South America. Naturally most families want to have their relations buried at home. So a corpse companion, like that chap, goes with it and sees the coffin home. Incidentally they make quite a tidy sum and get around a lot. Death has made that one into a dandy, as you see."

We climbed up a while longer, then put on our skis and ran down. The white slopes undulated up and down, and after us, barking, every now and then sinking to the chest in the snow, raced Billy like a red brown ball.

He had got used to me again, though he would still often turn in his tracks and race back hell-for-leather with flying ears to the sanatorium.

I was practising Christianias, and each time as I glided down the slope and prepared for the swing and relaxed my body, I would think: If I do it this time without falling, Pat will get better. The wind whistled past my face, the snow was heavy and sticky, but I persisted. I sought out ever steeper descents, ever more difficult ground; and when it succeeded again and again, I thought saved!—and knew it was foolish, and yet was happier than I had been for a long time.

On Saturday evening there was a big, secret exodus. Antonio had ordered sleighs to be ready a short distance below and somewhat aside from the sanatorium. Himself he tobogganed off, yodelling happily, down the slope in his dancing pumps and open coat, from under which gleamed the white waistcoat of his dress suit.

"He's crazy," said I.

"He often does that," replied Pat. "He's quite irresponsible. It helps him through. He wouldn't always be so good-humoured otherwise."

"To make up we're going to pack you in all the more."

I wrapped her in every rug and shawl that we had. Then the sleighs tramped off down the hill. It was a long procession. Everybody who could, had escaped. One might have thought we were a wedding party going down into the valley, so festively nodded the plumes on the horses' heads in the moonlight, and there was such laughter and shouting from sleigh to sleigh.

The Kursaal was lavishly decorated. The dancing had already begun when we arrived. A corner sheltered from draughts from the windows was reserved for the guests from the sanatorium. It was warm and smelt of flowers, perfume and wine.

A crowd of people sat at our table—the Russian, Rita, the violinist, an old woman, a bejewelled death's head, a gigolo who belonged to it, Antonio and some more.

"Come on, Robby," said Pat, "let's see if we can't dance."

The floor revolved slowly around us. The violin and cello rose in liquid melody above the whispering orchestra. Lightly the feet of the dancers glided over the floor.

"But my dearest darling, you dance marvellously all of a sudden," said Pat in surprise.

"Well, hardly marvellously—"

"But yes. Where did you learn?".

"Gottfried showed me," said I.

"In the workshop?"

"Yes, and the Café International. We had to have ladies, naturally. Rosa, Marian and Wally put the finishing touches. But I'm afraid the result isn't exactly what would be called elegant."

"Oh yes!" Her eyes were shining. "The first time we've ever danced together, Robby."

Alongside us the Russian was dancing with the Spanish girl. He smiled

and nodded to us. The Spaniard was very pale. Her black, glistening hair encircled her brow like the raven's wing. She danced with a fixed, solemn face. On her wrist was a bracelet of big, square emeralds. She was eighteen. From the table the violinist followed her with lustful eyes.

We went back again. "Now I'd like a cigarette," said Pat.

"You oughtn't to, you know," I replied prudently.

"Only a few draws, Robby. It's so long since I had a smoke."

She took the cigarette but soon laid it aside. "I don't like the taste, Robby. I just don't like it any more."

I laughed. "It's always so when you've been deprived of anything for a long time."

"You were deprived of me for a long time," said she..

"It's so only with poisons," I replied: "Schnapps and tobacco."

"Human beings are a much worse poison than schnapps or tobacco, darling."

I laughed. "You are a clever child, Pat."

She propped her arms on the table and looked at me. "You have never taken me really seriously, have you?"

"I've never taken myself really seriously," I replied.

"Nor me. Be truthful for once."

"I don't know about that. But the two. of us together I've always taken terribly seriously, I do know that."

She smiled. Antonio invited her to dance. The two walked to the dance floor. I watched while they danced. She smiled at me each time as she passed. Her silver shoes hardly touched the floor. She had the movements of an antelope.

The Russian was dancing with the Spanish girl again. Both were silent. His big, dark face was filled with an overshadowing tenderness. The violinist had made an effort to dance with the Spaniard. She merely shook her head and walked to the dance floor with the Russian.

The violinist broke a cigarette in his long, bony fingers. I suddenly felt sorry for him. I offered him a cigarette. He declined. "I must take care of myself," said he in a jagged voice.

I nodded. "That chap," he went on, with a snigger, pointing to the Russian, "smokes fifty a day."

"One does one thing, another another," I replied.

"She may not want to dance with me now, but I'll get her yet."

"Who?"

"Rita."

He edged nearer. "I was well in with her once. We used to play together. Then the Russian came and pinched her with his speechifyings. But I'll get her again."

"Then you'll have to overexert yourself," said I. I didn't like him.

He broke into feeble laughter. "Exert myself, you poor simp? I've only to wait."

"Then wait by all means."

"Fifty cigarettes," he whispered, "daily. I saw his X ray yesterday. Cavity beside cavity. Finished." He laughed again. "We were alike at the start. You might have interchanged the X rays. You ought to see the difference now! I've put on two pounds. No, my boy, I've only to wait, and take care of myself. I'm looking forward already to the next picture. The nurse always shows them to me. Wait, that's all. When he's out of the way, then will be my turn."

"One way, I suppose," said I.

"One way," he mimicked; "the only way, you fathead. If I tried to cut across him now, I'd only spoil my chances for later. No—quite friendly, calmly—to wait—"

The air grew thick and heavy. Pat coughed. I noticed that she looked at me anxiously, so I pretended I had not heard. The old woman with the many pearls just sat quietly sunken in upon herself. Now and then she would give a shrill laugh. The death's head was quarrelling with the gigolo. The Russian smoked one cigarette after another.

The violinist lit them for him. A girl gave a sudden convulsive sob, held her handkerchief to her mouth, gazed into it and turned pale.

I looked along the room. Yonder were the tables of the winter sports people, there the tables of the solid burghers, there sat the French, there the English, and Dutchmen with the homely syllables of their speech, recalling meadows and the sea—and among them this little colony of sickness and death. I looked at Pat—meadows and sea—surf and sand and swimming—ach, thought I, dear frail brow! dear hands I dear life—that I can only love and cannot save.

I got up and went outside. I was stifled with oppression and impotence. I walked slowly along the path. I shivered with the cold, and the wind behind the houses made my flesh creep. I clenched my fists and stared at the hard, white mountains in a wild mixture of helplessness, anger and pain.

A sleigh tinkled past on the road below. I went back. Pat was coming toward me.

"Where have you been?"

"Only outside."

"Are you vexed?"

"Not at all."

"Be gay, darling! Be gay to-day. For my sake. Who knows when I'll be able to go to a ball again?

"You'll go very often."

She laid her head on my shoulder. "If you say so, it must be true. Come, let's dance again. We've never danced together before."

We danced, and the warm, soft light was merciful; it hid all the shadows that the late night had drawn on the faces.

"How do you feel, Pat?" I asked.

"Good, Robby."

"How lovely you are, Pat."

Her eyes brightened. "It's lovely of you to say that to me."

I felt her warm, dry lips on my cheek.

It was late when we got back to the sanatorium. "See now what he looks like," sniggered the violinist, furtively pointing to the Russian.

"You look just the same," said I irritably.

He eyed me, startled. "Yes—of course—you health-hog," he muttered.

I shook hands with the Russian. He nodded to me, and gently and lightly helped the Spanish girl up the stairs. As they climbed, his big, bowed back and the girl's frail shoulders against the feeble night-lighting looked as if the burden of the whole world lay on them. The death's head dragged the sulking gigolo off down the passage. Antonio said good night to us. It was all rather ghostly, this almost soundless, whispered parting.

Pat pulled her dress over her head. She stood bending over, and tugged at the shoulders. As she did so the stuff tore. Pat examined the place.

"It was probably split already," said I.

"It doesn't matter," said Pat, "I probably shan't ever use it again."

Slowly she folded up the dress, and did not hang it again in the wardrobe. She laid it in her trunk. Her face was suddenly tired.

"Look what I've got here," said I quickly, and produced a bottle of

champagne from my coat pocket. "Now for our own little celebration."

I brought glasses and filled them. She smiled again and drank. "To us both, Pat."

"Yes, my darling, to our lovely life."

How queer it all was—this room, the stillness and our misery. And beyond the door did not life stretch away unending, with forests, rivers and strong breath? On the other side of the white mountains was not March already knocking restless on the awakening earth?

"Are you staying with me the night, Robby?"

"Yes, let's go to bed. Let's get as near together as human beings can, and put our glasses on the bedcover and drink."

Drink. . . . Golden-brown skin. . . . Waiting. . . . Lying awake. . . . Stillness and the light wheezing of Pat's chest. . . .

Chapter XXVIII

The *föhn* blew and it thawed. A babbling muggy warmth filled the valley. The snow became soft and dripped from the roofs. The temperature curves mounted. Pat had to stay in bed. The doctor came every few hours. His expression grew ever more anxious.

One day as I was sitting at lunch, Antonio came and sat beside me.

"Rita is dead," said he.

"Rita? You mean the Russian surely?"

"No, Rita, the Spanish girl."

"But it is impossible," said I and felt my blood freeze. Rita had been far less sick than Pat.

"More surprising things than that are possible here," replied Antonio gloomily. "She died this morning. It was pneumonia as well."

"Pneumonia? That's a different matter," said I relieved.

"Eighteen. Terrible. Died so hard."

"And the Russian?"

"Ach, don't ask. He won't believe she's dead, says she only looks dead. He's sitting by her bed and they can't get him out of her room."

Antonio left again. I stared out the window. Rita was dead; but I just sat arid thought: It isn't Pat, it isn't Pat.

Through the glazed corridor I saw the violinist. Before I could get up he had arrived. He looked awful.

"I see you're smoking," said I, only to say something.

He laughed aloud. "Of course. Why not? Now? It doesn't matter now."

I gave a shrug.

"Think it's funny do you, you Holy Joe?" he asked scornfully.

"You are mad," said I.

"Mad? No, only sold." He leaned well across the table and blew his cognac breath in my face. "Sold I am. Tricked me they have. The swine. Everything swine. You too, you sanctimonious swine."

"If you weren't sick I'd pitch you out the window," said

"Sick? Sick?" he mimicked. "I'm cured, as good as cured; I'm going out soon. Marvellous case of rapid encapsulation! A joke, eh?"

"You be thankful," said I. "Once you're away from here you'll soon forget your troubles."

"So?" he replied. "You think so, do you? You matter-of-fact nit-wit, you healthy bonehead. God preserve your smug soul."

He staggered off, but turned again. "Come along with me. Stay with me, let's drink. I'll pay everything. I can't be by myself."

"Haven't time," said I. "Find somebody else."

I went up again to Pat. She was lying, breathing heavily, with lots of pillows at her back. "Wouldn't you like to go skiing?"

I shook my head. "The snow's too bad. It's thawing everywhere."

"Then wouldn't you play chess with"Antonio?"

"No," said I. "I want to stay here with you."

"Poor Robby!" She tried to move. "Well, get yourself something to drink at least."

"I can do that all right!"

I went to my room and fetched a bottle of cognac and a glass.

"Will you have a little drop?" I asked. "You are allowed to, you know."

She took a little sip, and after a while another. Then she gave me back the glass. I filled it and drank. "You oughtn't to drink from the same glass as I," said Pat.

"Makes it all the nicer." I filled up once more and tipped it down.

She shook her head. "You mustn't, Robby. You oughtn't to kiss me any more either. You oughtn't to be with me at all. You mustn't get sick."

"I will kiss you, and I don't give a brass tack."

"No, you mustn't. And you mustn't sleep in my bed any more."

"All right, then you sleep with me in mine."

She moved her lips in refusal. "Stop, Robby. You have to live a long time yet. I want you to keep well and have children and a wife."

"I'm having neither children, nor wife, except you. You are my child and my wife."

She lay still awhile. "I would like to have had a child of yours, Robby," said she then, leaning her cheek on my shoulder. "I never wanted it before. I just couldn't imagine it. But now I often think about it. It must be nice when something of one remains. Then sometimes when the child would look at you, you would remember me. And I'd be there again for the time being."

"We'll have a child yet," said I. "When you're well again. I'd like to have a child of yours, Pat. But it must be a girl, and be called Pat."

She took the glass from my hand and drank a sip.

"Perhaps it's as well we haven't one, darling. You must forget me. And if you do think of me, it must only be to think it was a good time with us—nothing else. It's over, that we'll never understand. But you mustn't be sad."

"I'm sad when you talk so."

She looked at me for some time. "When you lie like this, you do think a lot. And all sorts of things strike you as strange that you wouldn't even have noticed otherwise. Do you know what I can't understand now? That two people should love as we do, and yet one die."

"Be still," said I. "In life one or the other has to die first. But we're not that far by a long way yet."

"People should die, only when they're alone. Or when they hate—not when they love."

I forced a smile. "Yes, Pat," said I, taking her hot hands in mine; "if we had the making of the world it would look better, eh?"

She nodded. "Yes, darling. We wouldn't allow things like that. If only one knew what's behind it. Do you think it goes on, afterwards?"

"Yes," said I. "It's so badly made it doesn't know how to stop."

She smiled. "That's one explanation, I suppose. But do you find this so badly made too?" She pointed to a bunch of yellow roses beside her bed.

"That's just it," I replied; "the details are wonderful, but the whole has no sense. As if it had been made by a madman who could think of nothing better to do with the marvellous variety of life that he had created but to annihilate it again."

"And to make it afresh," said Pat.

"I see no sense in that either. So 'far it hasn't got any better as a result."

"Anyway, darling," said Pat, "he hasn't done so badly by us. That couldn't have been better; Only too short. Far too short."

A few days later I felt a prickling in my chest and coughed. The doctor heard the noise as he was going down the corridor and put his head in at my door.

"You come along to the consulting room."

"It's nothing," said I.

"That's not the point," he replied. "With a cough like that you mustn't sit with Fräulein Hollmann. You come with me."

With strange satisfaction I took off my shirt in the consulting room. Good health up here seemed almost unjustifiable. You felt like a profiteer or a lead-swinger.

The doctor eyed me curiously. "You look as if you were pleased," said he, puckering his brow.

Then he examined me carefully. I contemplated the bright objects against the wall, breathed deep and slow, and quick and short, in and out, as he required. As I did so, I felt the prickle again and was pleased now to have less advantage over Pat.

"You've taken a chill," said the doctor. "Go to bed for a day or two, or any rate stay in your room. You mustn't go into Fräulein Hollmann's room."

"Can I talk through the door?" I asked. "Or over the balcony?"

"Over the balcony yes, but only a few minutes, and through the door, too, for that matter, provided you gargle well. As well as a chill you have smoker's cough."

"And the lungs?" I somehow expected that at least some little detail there might not be quite in order. I should have felt better in relation to Pat then.

"I could make three sets out of your lungs," declared the doctor. "You're the healthiest person I've seen in a long time. You have a pretty hard liver, that's all. You drink too much probably."

He prescribed something for me and I went back.

"Robby," said Pat from her room, "what did he say?"

"I mustn't come in to you, for the time being," I replied through the door.

"Strictly forbidden. Risk of infection."

"You see," said she alarmed, "I always wanted you not to, any more."

"Risk of infecting you, Pat. Not me."

"Don't talk nonsense," said she. "Tell me, truly, what is the matter?"

"That is the truth. Nurse"—I winked at the nurse, who had just brought me the medicine—"tell Fräulein Hollmann which of us is the more dangerous."

"Herr Lohkamp," declared the nurse. "He is not to be allowed in, so that he won't infect you."

Pat looked incredulously from the nurse to me. I showed her the medicine through the door. Then she realised it was true and began to laugh, more and more; she laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks, and she started coughing painfully so that the nurse had to run and support her.

"My God, darling," she whispered, "that is too funny! And how proud you look!"

She was quite gay the whole evening. Of course I did not leave her to herself, but sat on the balcony till midnight in a thick coat, a scarf round my neck, a cigar in one hand and a glass in the other, a bottle of cognac at my feet, telling her stories of my life. Interrupted and egged on by her soft birdlike laughter I lied for all I was worth, just to see the smile slip into her face. I made the most of my barking cough'and drank the bottle empty, and next morning was cured.

The *föhn* came again. The wind rattled at the windows, the clouds hung low, the snows shifted and slumped and boomed through the nights, and the patients lay awake, irritable and excited, listening out into the darkness. On sheltered slopes the crocuses began to flower, and on the roads among the sleighs appeared the first high-wheeled vehicles.

Pat grew steadily weaker. She could not get up any more. At night she would often have fits of choking. Then she would turn grey from fear of dying. I would hold her damp, feeble hands. "If I can only get through this hour," she coughed, "just this hour, Robby. It's now they die—"

She was afraid of the last hour between night and morning. She believed that with the end of the night the mysterious stream of life became weaker and almost expired—and she dreaded only that hour and did not want to be left alone. For the rest she was so brave that I had often to clench my teeth.

I had my bed moved into her room and sat with her when she waked and the desperate imploring look would come in her eyes. I often thought of the morphia phials in my bag, and would not have hesitated to do it, had she not been so grateful for every new day.

I sat by her and told her anything that came into my head. She was not allowed to talk much, and liked listening to me while I told her all the things that had ever happened to me. She enjoyed most to hear stories of my schooldays, and often, after she had had an attack and was sitting, stricken and pale, among the pillows, she would ask me to do a turn imitating one or another of my old schoolmasters. Gesticulating and blustering, plucking an imaginary red beard, I would roam around the room, delivering myself in a snarling voice of some of the riper plums of schoolmasterly wisdom. Each day I added new ones to my repertory, and before long Pat was familiar with

all the rowdies and ragamuffins of our class, who were forever preparing fresh vexations for the masters. Once the night nurse arrived, attracted by the sonorous bass of our head master; and, to Pat's delight, it was a long time before I could convince her I had not taken leave of my senses, merely because I was hopping around the room in a pelerine of Pat's and a wideawake hat, reading the laws of the Medes and Persians to a certain Karl Ossage who had been caught secretly sawing the legs of the teacher's desk.

Then slowly the daylight trickled through the window. The backs of the mountains became knife-sharp, black silhouettes. The sky behind them began to recede, cold and pale. The night-lamp on the table faded to pale yellow and Pat laid her wet face in my hands. "It's over, Robby. Now I have one more day again."

Antonio brought me his radio. I connected it to the electric light and the heating, and tried it out with Pat that, night. It squeaked and quacked and then suddenly out of the scratching a clear, sweet music disentangled itself.

"What's that, darling?" asked Pat.

Antonio had given me a wireless journal as well. I flipped it open. "Rome, I believe."

Then almosfc-immediately came the deep, metallic voice of the announcer: *"Radio Roma—Napoli—Firenze—"*

I turned farther. A pianoforte solo. "I don't have to look that up," said I. "That's Beethoven's Waldstein Sonata. I could play it once—in the days when I still imagined that sometime or other I was going to become a music teacher, or a professor, or a composer even. But that was a long time ago. I couldn't do it now. Let's turn on again. They're not pleasant memories."

A rich contralto, soft and caressing: "*Parlez-moi d'amour—*"

"Paris, Pat."

A talk on how to combat red spider. I turned again. Advertisements. A quartet. "What's that?" asked Pat.

"Prague. String quartet, Opus 59, Beethoven," I read out.

I waited till the movement ended, then turned again, and 'all at once there was a violin, a marvellous violin. "That'll be Budapest, Pat. Gipsy music." I adjusted the dial accurately. Full and sweet the melody now floated above the orchestra of cymbals, fiddles and pan pipes. "Lovely, Pat, eh?"

She was silent. I turned round. She was crying with wide-open eyes. I

flicked off the instrument.

"What is it, Pat?" I put my arm around her thin shoulders.

"Nothing, Robby. It's stupid of me. But to hear that— Paris, Rome, Budapest—my God, and I would be happy if I could get down even to the village once again."

"But Pat . . ."

I told her everything I could to take her mind from it. But she shook her head. "I'm not sad, darling. You mustn't think that. I'm not sad when I cry. It just comes over me sometimes, but not for long. I think too much for that."

"What do you think about then?" I asked, and kissed her hair.

"About the only thing I can think of now—about living and dying. Then when I am sad and understand nothing any more, I say to myself that it's better to die while you still want to live, than to die and want to die. What do you think?"

"I don't know."

"Yes, you do." She rested her head on my shoulder. "If you want to live still, then there must be something you love. It's harder, but it's easier too. You see, I had to die; and now I'm just thankful I have had you. I might easily have been alone and unhappy. Then I would have been glad to die. Now it is hard; but to make up, I'm quite full of love, as a bee is full of honey when it comes back to the hive in the evening. If I had to choose, of the two I would still choose the same."

She looked at me. "Pat," said I, "there is still a third —when the *föhn* stops, then you'll get better and we'll go away from here."

"She continued to look at me searchingly. "I'm afraid for you, Robby. It's much harder for you than for me."

"Let's not talk about it any more," said I.

"I only said it, so you shouldn't think I was sad," she replied.

"I don't think you are sad," said I.

She laid her hand on my arm. "Won't you let the gipsies play again?"

"Would you like to hear them?"

"Yes, darling."

I turned on the instrument, and softly, then fuller and fuller, the violin with the flutes and muffled throb of the cymbals resounded through the room.

"Lovely," said Pat. "Like a breeze. A breeze that floats you away."

It was an evening concert from a garden restaurant in Budapest. Occasionally the conversation of the guests was audible through the

whispering music, and now and then one caught a clear jovial shout. One could imagine the chestnuts of the Margaretheninsel already in their first leaf; shimmering in the moonlight and moving as if stirred by the breeze of the fiddles. Perhaps it was a warm night already there, and the people sitting in the open, with glasses of yellow Hungarian wine in front of them, the waiters running to and fro in their white jackets, the gipsies playing, and then afterwards they would walk home tired, through the green spring dawn. And there lay Pat and smiled, and never again would come out of this room, never again get up off this bed.

Then suddenly everything went very swiftly. The flesh of the dear face melted. The cheekbones protruded and at the temple the bone showed through. Her arms were thin as a child's arms, the ribs stretched taut under the skin and the fever raged in ever fresh bouts through the frail body. The nurse brought oxygen balloons and the doctor came every hour.

One afternoon her temperature dropped with inexplicable suddenness. Pat waked up and looked at me a long time.

"Give me a looking-glass," she whispered then.

"What do you want a looking-glass for?" I asked. "Rest, Pat. I think you're over it now. You have hardly airy temperature."

"No," she whispered in her threadbare, burnt-out voice. "Give me the looking-glass."

I walked round the bed, took the looking-glass and let it drop. It broke in pieces. "Sorry," said I, "to be so clumsy. It just dropped out of my hand and now it's in a thousand pieces."

"There's another in my handbag, Robby."

It was a tiny chromium mirror. I wiped my hand over it to dull the surface, and gave it to Pat. Laboriously she rubbed it clean and looked into it intently. "You must go away, darling," she whispered.

"Why? Don't you like me any longer?"

"You mustn't see me any more. That isn't me any more."

I took the looking-glass. "These metal things are no good, Pat. Just see what I look like in it. Pale and thin. Whereas I'm brown and strong. It's all wavy, the thing is."

"I want you to keep a different memory of me," she whispered. "Go, darling. I'll see it through now by myself."

I quieted her. She asked for the mirror again and her handbag. Then she began powdering her poor emaciated face, her torn lips, the heavy, brown hollows under her eyes. "Just something, darling," said she, trying to smile. "You mustn't see me looking hideous."

"Do what you will," said I, "you will never be hideous. For me you are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen."

I took away the mirror and the powder box, and laid my hands gently around her head. After a while she grew restless.

"What is it, Pat?" I asked.

"It ticks so loud," she whispered.

"What? The watch?"

She nodded. "It's so threatening—"

I took the watch off my wrist.

She looked anxiously at the second hand. "Throw it away."

I took the watch and flung it against the wall. "There, it's not ticking any more now. Now time is standing still. We've torn it in two. Now only we two are here; we two, you and me and no one else."

She looked at me. Her eyes were very big.

"Darling—" she whispered.

I could not bear her glance. It came from far away and passed through me to some place beyond.

"Old lad," I murmured, "dear, brave, old lad."

She died in the last hour of the night, before morning came. She died hard and no one could help her. She held my hand fast, but she did not know any longer that I was with her.

One time someone said: "She is dead."

"No," I replied, "she is not dead yet. She is still holding my hand fast."

Light. Intolerable, harsh light. People. The doctor. Slowly I opened my hand. Pat's hand dropped down. Blood. A distorted, suffocated face. Tortured, fixed eyes. Brown, silky hair.

"Pat," said I. "Pat."

And for the first time she did not answer me.

"I'd like to be alone," said I.

"Shouldn't we first . . . ?" asked someone.

"No," said I. "Go out. Don't touch her."

Then I washed the blood from her. I was like wood. I combed her hair. She grew cold. I laid her in my bed and covered her with the bedclothes. I sat beside her and could not think. I sat on the chair and stared at her. The dog came in and sat with me. I watched her face alter. I could do nothing but sit vacantly and watch her. The morning came and it was she no longer.

THE END

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